

Autopsy of an Island Currency



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Introduction	3
Authors' note	3
Timeline	5
Summary of the project	6
What do we want to do?	9
What is Suomenlinna like?	17
Who wants to work with us?	27
How will the currency work and how will it look?	45
Should we continue with the project?	63
What did we uncover?	79
Essays	85
The curiosity of creating money	86
Pekko Koskinen	
Taking stock – alternative economies, local and beyond	90
Antti Jauhainen	
Frontlining currency: ‘speculative numismatics’ as antagonistic graphic design	94
Chris Lee	
Bitcoin, the end of the taboo on money	100
Denis Roio aka Jaromil	
Participatory art – a paradigm shift from objects to subjects	110
Suzana Milevska	
What’s the use? On the value of participatory projects	114
Susanne Jaschko	
Credits	118
Authors	119

■ Introduction

This book documents and reflects on a project that tried to create an experimental local currency for the small island of Suomenlinna near Helsinki. The book describes the process that took place over the two-and-a-half-year duration of the project. It looks at the particular challenges faced by the project, as well as the broader topics of participatory practices and money as a social and material medium. The book is aimed at practitioners who work at the intersection of art, research and social action. It should be particularly useful for people working on alternative money models and projects.

The first part of the book tells the story of the project through a series of vignettes that describe incidents that shaped the project, and give the reader an insight into the ambiguous dynamics of participatory processes. Each vignette is presented from the point of view of one or several project team members and focuses on their personal experiences. These vignettes are accompanied by related pictorial and textual artefacts that were produced during the project such as interview notes, newspaper articles, photos and money designs. This first part of the book is structured as a linear diary with the exception of one chapter, which explains the design and functioning of the alternative currency. While the chapters can be read chronologically, the book's structure also allows for reading in a less linear way according to one's main interests.

The second part of the book positions the project in a wider context of participatory art and alternative money projects. It contains a number of commissioned and republished essays that reflect on the social, political, economic and artistic context of the project.

■ Authors' note

The book is composed of multiple voices: artist Christian Nold, producer Nathalie Aubret and curator Susanne Jaschko who each had different roles in the project and therefore have individual perspectives on the events.

When we finished the project, so many questions remained that we felt the only way to understand what had happened was to describe it from our different viewpoints and try to build a collective reflection of the project. The book captures this 'speaking aloud' about our experiences, and through its fractured narrative reflects on the central issue at the heart of the project—the challenge of engaging with people and material contexts directly and personally.

While reading this book, it is important to remember that it is a biased account, due to the authors being the main protagonists of the text. Yet, we tried as far as possible to cross-reference our accounts and work from audio recordings and notes taken at the time.

At certain points we have indicated when the text is from a particular person's viewpoint, or written collaboratively. The book itself was written and edited over the internet in Finland, England and Germany. During the layout process the book moved with its designer from Poland to Bosnia and Herzegovina, then to Spain and back to Poland, where it was printed.

Because some of the events we describe in the book are problematic, we refrained from identifying specific individuals. With the exception of the contributors to the money design competition, we used pseudonyms for all the people we encountered during the project. Documentation material like newspaper articles which we republish in this book are left unaltered. This created a few inconsistencies with the pseudonyms. Using pseudonyms was a difficult decision since many people contributed so much to the project and we wanted them to be properly acknowledged. We have given these people special attribution at the back of the book.

We hope that all the people who had contact with the project feel that the book represents them fairly and that it gives them some insight into the overall process of the project. We wrote the book based on our need to express and analyse what we experienced, and tried to do so in the most honest and sensitive way possible.

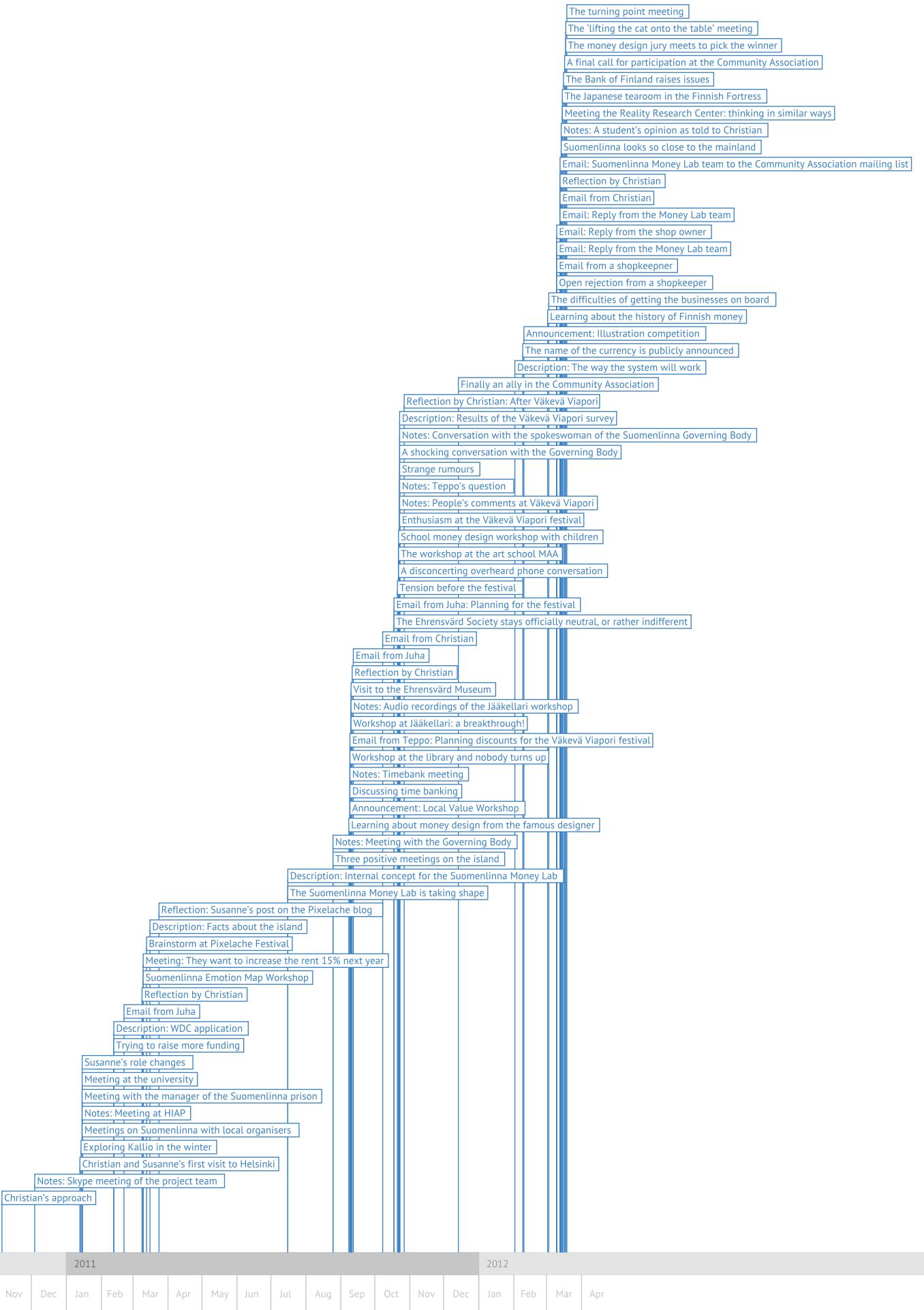
*Christian Nold
Nathalie Aubret
Susanne Jaschko*

Susanne's context and objectives
Pixelache's context and aims for the project

Timeline of the project

2010

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct



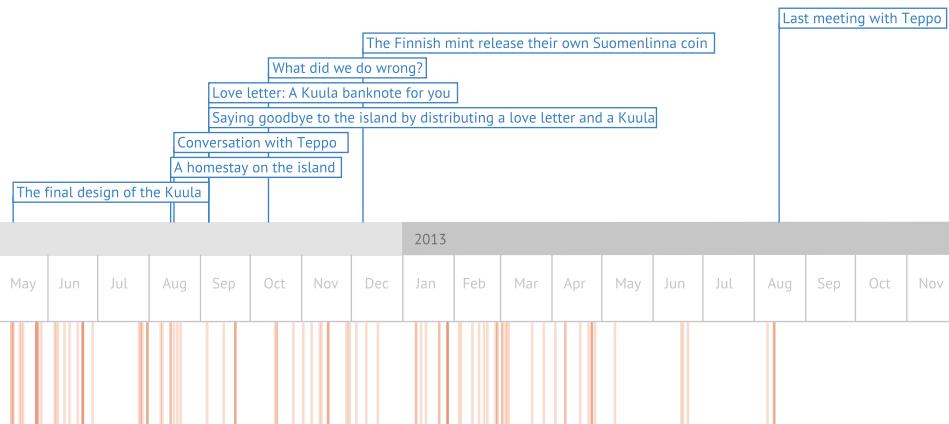
Timeline

The timeline represents the email traffic between the project team members over the duration of the project as well as important events that took place. The graph shows the dates of events as blue flags stacked on top of each other; a rapid ascent in the flags indicates many important events happening within a few days. The red lines represent the email traffic between the team members over the duration of the project. On days when multiple emails were sent the red lines are displayed in a deeper red colour.

This timeline functions as both an overview of the book as well as an affective representation of enthusiasm and energy levels throughout the project. The graph shows a steady increase in activity at the beginning as the team starts to make sense of the project and go through site visits and discussions. There is a rapid spiking of activity in two clusters and then a drop-off.

The cluster in September and October 2011 corresponds to a visit to the island when the currency became clearly defined and we garnered lots of popular support at the Väkevä Viapori festival. At the same time, the project team met a lot of surprising opposition from the island's Governing Body and in the form of rumours being spread about us. This combination of positive and negative experiences led to a lot of discussions and reflections, all of which are represented in the graphs.

The second cluster of email traffic and book sections appears in March 2012, which coincides with another visit to the island of Suomenlinna and the subsequent reflection and discussion. At this point the project team was confronting the difficulties of recruiting businesses and the emotional fallout this had on the project team. We tried to have one last, large meeting with residents but when this too didn't work as well as we had hoped, we made the difficult decision to abandon the project at a turning point meeting, and to move towards documenting the project. After March 2012 there is a drop-off in the graph that is a reflection of the dissipation of the project's momentum.



■ Summary of the project

The focus of this book is an artistic research project that took place in Helsinki, Finland, from April 2010 to August 2013 which, once it was well defined, came to be called the Suomenlinna Money Lab project. The general aim of the Money Lab was to engage with the specifics of a local setting by working with local people and creating a project that would generate interesting research and be beneficial to local dynamics. It was an ambitious attempt to explore and affect a unique place and its social dynamics through participatory art and design practice. The first part of this book documents the initial search for a suitable local context as well as the efforts to connect with groups of people to discuss ideas with and collaborate with.

After considering several neighbourhoods in Helsinki, we settled on the island of Suomenlinna for the project. Suomenlinna is a very special place with about 800 permanent residents, which is protected as a UNESCO heritage site and receives 650,000 visitors every year. We did not come to the island with a preconceived concept of what the project should be. Our approach was to meet key local actors of the island and conduct a series of public workshops open for anyone to join. We wanted to get a better sense of the island and start discussions about what kind of project to set up.

Many of the initial ideas and directions were based on the skills and knowledge of Christian Nold, the artistic initiator of the project. Due to the way the project was commissioned by Pixelache, we assumed that some kind of new technology would be developed, people would be involved and the end result have some relation to new media art.

We held a number of public events to discuss our ideas with local people and tourists, and the response was always positive, but there was a nagging feeling of doubt because we had no firm commitments to collaborate from anyone. One problem was that we only managed to draw a small number of enthusiastic individuals to the brainstorming events. We thought that the problem was that the project was not defined enough, so we proceeded to focus more on clarifying the idea of a currency for the island. We felt that this currency could only be implemented through some firm local commitment due to the nature of the project, which would involve the transaction of 'real money' being exchanged into a local currency and back again. These aspects had a seriousness that required mutual trust and a commitment from local shops to accept and exchange the local currency.

While there were certain groups of people on the island such as the Community Association, craftspeople and artists that were very enthusiastic and saw the value of the currency, we encountered difficulties with the complex power structures of the island. Apart from the local Community Association, the project had little official support and was strongly affected by opposition from the Governing Body and certain individuals. In a revealing conversation with a spokesperson

from the Governing Body, we learnt that the official administrative organisation of the island was opposed to the project and had been talking to the local shops and appeared to be discouraging them from taking part. Their objections were unclear but seemed to stem from a fear of losing control of the way the island was run and the identity of island communicated to tourists. All our attempts to investigate and understand these negative reactions were rebuffed.

While our participatory project was having fundamental problems with enrolling people, we were also unwittingly uncovering power structures on the island. These dynamics clearly appeared after we interviewed a well-known graphic designer living on the island, who was famous for creating the designs for the old Finnish national currency. His initial enthusiasm for the project suddenly and inexplicably disappeared, and we later heard of rumours that we had supposedly forced our way into his house to get the interview. We got the impression that there was a dirty tricks campaign being waged against the project. Rather than building social cohesion as we'd sought, we seemed to have created a process that irritated locally important organisations and individuals. At this crisis point in the process, we reconsidered the project and changed our aim from trying to create an actual currency towards documenting and understanding what was taking place on the island.

In the end we produced Suomenlinna banknotes that were designed by a local art student and used them as cultural probes to gauge people's position on the project. A banknote was slipped into every resident's letterbox with a personal letter and a request to tell us what they thought of the project. This final attempt at engagement collapsed into irony when we received very few responses and the website we had built became a thriving habitat for automated internet spam bots.

The process seems to have illuminated an unfamiliar vision of Suomenlinna as not an island idyll, but more like a feudal village filled with uncomfortable power relations. It felt as if the physical geography of the island was a psychological entity that was very present in the project. By trying to set up a currency we needed to enrol the islanders and get their approval, but we hit a wall when we were unable to engage with the island itself. So many peculiar things were going on: accidental encounters facilitated by the island's geography, people who were positive one minute and became aggressive the next—one member of the project team, faced with these negative emotions, had a near breakdown and refused to go back to Suomenlinna. These feelings started to blend with wider questions about the nature of money and the way it divides people and brings them together. Was the failure of this project a symptom of cultural control of the island or a rejection of a model of 'participation'? Was the idea of an alternative local currency simply not attractive enough to get more people on board? Does a local currency require

a level of collective commitment that cannot be achieved on an island fortress where power is embedded in the historic structures of the island?

What do we want to do?

28 Mar 2010

Pixelache's context and aims for the project

Nathalie The Suomenlinna Money Lab is part of Pixelache's history of production residencies www.pixelache.ac. This history dates back to the artists Manu Luksch and Mukul Patel (UK) from Ambient TV being hosted by the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art (NIFCA) as part of their Media Air residency programme in Suomenlinna in 2004. Since then, production residencies have been mostly based on invitation from the Pixelache office. Diverse in purpose and varied in scale, they have included the realisation of performances, workshops, VJ software, and artworks, usually presented in the context of Pixelache Festival. Though most did not aim to engage directly with the space of the city, they did facilitate connections with and networking within the local scene. These production residencies, organised around the festival period, have been an important tool for Pixelache to present new works by emerging young creators, either finished works or prototypes, an approach that has always been a crucial focus of the festival programme.

The largest production and public space installation to date, and the first to be disconnected from the Pixelache Festival period, was the Nuage Vert project www.nuagevert.org designed and realised by HeHe in 2008. Nuage Vert opened up new communication possibilities, presenting new ideas on engaging environmental issues to the public in ways very different from those of the festival. It also helped to form ideas to make the festival more clearly restructured around activities accessible to the public and activities targeted at a professional audience. Nuage Vert was very successful, but occupied a lot of resources for a small organisation like Pixelache, human resources in particular.

Based on that positive experience, we were eager to produce more local projects with artists in the context of production residencies, but aware of the difficulties of both running a yearly festival and work-intensive production residencies. At the end of 2010 we won a substantial activity grant for the first time from the Finnish Ministry of Education. Receiving this support changed our perspective, allowing us to be less dependent on festival funding and to redefine the way we organised our activities. From that moment, our organisation went through a series of changes and developments.

Pixelache Festival left the safety and comfort of the Kiasma museum, its home since 2003, for the first time in 2011, and took over Suomenlinna www.pixelache.ac/festival-2011. Pixelache Festival had long had a special relationship with the island, organising its welcome event at the Suomenlinna hostel year after year, and booking the entire place for participants for a week. It is also worth mentioning that a few early festival events took place in former NIFCA's premises (Gallery Augusta) mostly in connection with Pixelache's production residencies. A number of Pixelache Festival participants have

a collection of great memories from their stay on the island. The 2011 edition of Pixelache was held in several of the Governing Body's meeting and seminar spaces, which they provided for free. At this point in time, it is fair to say that the Governing Body had a rather positive attitude towards Pixelache.

After the 10th edition of Pixelache in the spring of 2011, we took a year-long break from organising the big festival in order to give ourselves some time to readjust to our new situation with funding, and scaled down to Camp Pixelache www.pixelache.ac/camp12 in 2012. With the new funding we were able to allocate more substantial resources to our year-round activities, including our outreach and educational programme Pixelversity www.pixelache.ac/pixelversity coordinated and facilitated by Andrew Paterson, and to a new production residency that would lead to the realisation of a new artwork in public space. In late summer 2011 a few crucial elements seemed to have come together to support Susanne Jaschko's proposal to set up a new production residency to realise a site-specific project. It was a totally different situation to when we started Nuage Vert. We were on secure financial footing for the first time and were not dependent on external funding. Our aim with the new production and collaboration was to connect with the local context and the general public.

Juha Huusonen, programme director of Pixelache when the project started, left the organisation in the autumn of 2011 to pursue other projects. Juha was the one who initially discussed the idea of realising a local project with Susanne, and he played an important role in helping to find the right context for the project and providing feedback once we'd brought Christian on board. After Juha's departure, the core team of the Pixelache office in the autumn 2011 was: Andrew Paterson, who has a lot of experience in participatory projects and gave us very useful feedback on the project; Suvi, Pixelache's production assistant and information officer; Ville Hyvönen, chairman of our association; and Nathalie, coordinator of Pixelache.

2 Apr 2010

Susanne's context and objectives

Susanne When Pixelache sent out a call for curators for the March 2011 edition of the festival, I sent three proposals, which the final Map Me If You Will seminar and workshop programme were developed from www.pixelache.ac/festival-2011/programme/map-me-if-you-will. When Juha and I began discussing the various possibilities, it became clear that both the Pixelache organisers and I were interested in considering a long-term art project that could have a sustained effect on Helsinki, beyond the format of the Pixelache Festival. Pixelache had already realised just such a project in 2008: Nuage Vert by HeHe. It was developed over the course of almost three years and, despite this long and rocky process, it resulted in an art installation that

created a lot of public awareness and was awarded both the Ars Electronica Golden Nica and 01SJ Green Prix for Environmental Art. Encouraged by the effect of this project, Pixelache was hoping to be able to produce a second project in the same vein, while I was hoping that I could initiate and facilitate something that would have a larger impact than a gallery exhibition or an art crowd targeted event. At that point my curatorial interest had shifted substantially from media art to less technology-based art and design practices that nevertheless have an experimental, processual nature. Having curated a number of public art programmes, I was eager to explore new ways of initiating dialogue and social interaction through art and design processes, an interest that I formulated later with the creation of prozessagenten www.prozessagenten.org.

Right from the very earliest discussions about the content of the programme I would be curating, Christian's name was on the list of potential contributors. I had already considered him for a show I curated, Process as Paradigm, at LABoral, Spain in 2010. Co-curator Lucas Evers and I wanted Christian for the show, but abandoned the idea when it became apparent that we would not be able to realise a site-specific, public project outside the premises of the gallery. I had been acquainted with Christian's work for some time and appreciated his unique way of using technology as a tool to map and to learn about social and physical space. He was also the creator of the Bijlmer Euro project www.bijlmereuro.net that had just taken place in 2011. The Bijlmer Euro introduced a new kind of parasitical local currency in the Bijlmer neighbourhood of Amsterdam that added value on top official money.

In June 2010, Juha and I decided to focus on the subject of artistic mapping for the Pixelache Festival programme and we began to discuss a number of artists, including Christian, with regard to one or two site-specific productions in Helsinki. In August, after having been officially announced as a curator of Pixelache 2011, I contacted Christian and the other artists on our shortlist to find out if they were generally interested and available to develop a project in Helsinki. In the following Skype conversation, Christian outlined the range of possibilities for such a mapping project.

I went to Helsinki for a public talk at the Pixelache office and a series of curatorial meetings in October 2010. Juha and I discussed options for the project residency, and made the decision to invite Christian. Of all artists and project ideas on the table, we had the feeling that working with Christian was the most promising since he had offered us not just one project, but had brought a number of ideas into play. With these things in mind, we believed it was relevant to give Christian full freedom to develop a truly site-specific project for Helsinki.

Christian and I met in Helsinki to work on the project in January 2011. We were hoping to make contact with groups of people who would be interested in working with Christian and vice versa. He wanted to look at some neighbourhoods

to see if they could offer any points of departure for a project. In the past, Christian had developed participatory mapping projects for and with specific local groups and contexts. In the preparatory meetings on Skype, he had explained to us how important it would be to find a group in Helsinki that would not only participate but that could sustain and carry on a project after the artist was not part of the project anymore.

4 Nov 2010

Christian's approach

Christian I was very pleased when Pixelache and Susanne contacted me to work on the project. I love exploring new places and contexts. Working in Helsinki would mean flying over there to visit a number of sites and trying to find allies to work with to develop a project together. Essentially I was looking for a situation of enrolling people, as well as being enrolled into their dynamics and agendas, a kind of mutual enrolment towards building something exciting. As usual I brought a few basic ideas that I had been working on but that were very loose and open for adaption. I had a number of concepts to do with closed loop sensor systems, a mobile book scanning station where people could bring old books to be released under a public license or some kind of alternative currency. The most important thing from my side was to find an interesting context and a group of people who had an agenda and enthusiasm that I could engage with and allow us to work together to design some unusual interventions.

My way of working combines art and design and is related to Critical Design as described by Dunne (1999). The design part is an attempt to create tangible 'solutions' to real world issues, while the art part is an idiosyncratic way to identify and engage issues and contexts. Within Critical Design, the way that issues and problems are identified is messy and personal and different from a classic design process where a client writes a brief and then hires a designer to solve their problems. The kind of practice I am describing occurs on the margins of the art and design world, taking place in not-for-profit contexts such as small media organisations, universities and research labs.

Over the last decade, I have been developing my own version of this type of critical design that engages with specific local contexts and issues www.softhook.com. It involves working on projects by inventing socio-technical systems in collaboration with local groups and contexts. This way of working assumes that new and challenging ideas and technologies arise out of the specific uniquenesses of local places. This approach has taken me all over the world to create projects for these specific contexts. Practically, this means trying to work with a broad range of people and institutions to explore the dynamics of a context and create interventions that allow people to experiment with a local situation. The aim is not necessarily to try to resolve problems but to open

up new ways of visualising and shaping local dynamics. The projects usually take the form of tangible prototypes that go beyond ideas or concepts. This type of socio-technical prototyping aims to take experimental ideas and make them 'real' and 'possible', at least at a local scale where their effects can be seen and explored further. The goal is to inspire local entities to appropriate the projects and develop them further. Sometimes this process is successful, but sometimes for whatever reason, it does not engage a network of people, so the prototype project remains just as a series of memories, experiences and relationships that have been formed as well as documentation of the project.

The conceptual framework I use is Actor-Network Theory (Latour 1987, Callon 1986), which does not differentiate between humans and nonhumans and sees local dynamics as occurring as networks of actors. These actors can be people with agendas and desires as well as nonhuman entities such as animals, plants, technologies, ideas or institutions. The example that Latour gives is of a hotel key fob, which due to its clumsy shape and large size, 'reminds' the hotel guests to leave it at the reception when they leave the hotel. Latour suggests that the key fob is an actor that is shaping the behaviour of the guest and forms an important part of the hotel network. These actors are arranged in networks, held together by shared issues. In this model, networks are formed through a process of asking other entities to join. Actor-network theory uses the term, 'enrolment' to describe the process of trying to make humans and nonhumans participate. Enrolment happens by finding new potential allies and encouraging them to align with one's goals and ways of doing things.

Callon in his essay from 1986, describes a case study where scientists designed new traps that enrolled shellfish to enter the traps and allowed the researchers to gather scientific data and speak on behalf of the animals. At the same time the scientists managed to enrol the fishermen who needed to find ways of maximising their catch. Through this enrolment of the shellfish and fishermen the scientists built a network and gained the authority to become spokespeople for the whole fishing environment.

This notion of material enrolment is useful when we think about the central question of this book, which is about participation. Enrolment allows us to think not just about humans participating but also nonhuman entities such as a physical island or history being part of a network. Enrolment envisions power relationships as the subtle ways certain entities manage to become 'spokespeople' that are given the legitimacy to represent other humans and nonhumans.

Callon, M., 'Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay', in J. Law, (ed.) *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, Routledge, London, 1986, p. 196–223.

Dunne, A., *Hertzian Tales: Electronic Products, Aesthetic Experiences and Critical Design*, RCA CRD Research, London, 1999.

Latour, B., *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1987.

12 Jan 2011

Christian and Susanne's first visit to Helsinki

Nathalie The aim of the first visit was to choose a neighbourhood for the project. Suomenlinna, Kallio and Itä-keskus were considered and described in a long email from Juha prior to Susanne and Christian's visit. Itä-keskus was soon dropped as an option and the visit focused on Kallio and Suomenlinna. It is important to mention that by that time, it had already been decided that Suomenlinna was going to be the Pixelache Festival 2011 main venue, as this may have influenced our choice on where to develop the project.

13 Jan 2011

Exploring Kallio in the winter

Christian During the February visit, we made a trip through an area of Helsinki called Kallio. We had heard from the Pixelache team how exciting and multicultural the area was; how full of grass-roots organisations that we could work with. Juha took us on a walking tour of the area. Several of the Pixelache members, including some Kallio residents like Antti from the Association of Experimental Electronics, joined the tour and told stories about different places. Historically Kallio is a working class neighbourhood that still had a bad reputation ten years ago. For over a decade, it has attracted large amounts of students and artists as well as foreigners from Africa and other continents and has become rather hip. Kallio certainly has an interesting mix of people. It is still cheaper to live in Kallio than in other central neighbourhoods of Helsinki, however the area is slowly being gentrified.

It was a bitterly cold day when we walked through Kallio and with the wind we were happy to pop into a few of the Asian food shops to warm up. I noticed how these shops must have a small number of customers since they combined national food identities. A single shop combined Chinese, Indian and even Jamaican food together. We went into a local library where we talked about the concept of the open source book scanning project. The library was quite unusual and arranged over multiple levels, but was largely empty with very few people. I doubt we would have got many people involved in a project there. Finally we went into some of the 'alternative' shops. One was a head shop selling drug paraphernalia but it looked sadly empty with only a few pieces of tie-dye. The community organisations that we tried to visit to discuss working with were either closed or unavailable. The whole area felt a little bit small and sad with very few people on the streets or in the shops. We ended the walk sitting in a typical working class Kallio pub and brainstorming ideas for the project. After the walk both Susanne and I looked at

each other and shook our heads, neither of us felt this was the place to set up the project.

Looking back now and taking into account that during the project we met somebody working on a local currency for Kallio, maybe we made a mistake. Perhaps we missed the dynamism of the area, which was not easy to see on a wintery walk through the streets. But Kallio did not feel inviting and did not communicate its liveliness. From my point of view it felt like setting up a project there would have resulted in another generic community project. The island of Suomenlinna felt so much more interesting, unique and challenging...

14 Jan 2011

Meetings on Suomenlinna with local organisers

Nathalie We had a meeting with local groups at the Helsinki International Artist-in-Residence Programme (HIAP) www.hiap.fi that included Sofia, as well as people from the Ehrensvärd Society and the Suomenlinna Summer Theatre project www.suomenlinnaturours.com/ehrensvrd_society.

During this meeting, they told us some important aspects of the life of the island. In summer, during the tourist season, Suomenlinna is a radically different island to wintertime, when few outsiders come to visit. The ferry is the umbilical connection to the mainland, which dictates the rhythm of life in winter. In the eyes of our hosts, the island exists on three levels: that of a small village, of a world heritage site and of a recreation area for people from Helsinki. We also heard for the first time of an ongoing project to rebrand Suomenlinna, coordinated by the Governing Body of Suomenlinna, and thought of it as an interesting process in relation to questions of identity and perception, which a project like ours would address in various ways. We were also told about an interesting artistic project called A Place to Spend Time, realised by HIAP residents in collaboration with inmates from Suomenlinna's open prison in 2009 www.davinadrummond.co.uk/Suomenlinna-A-Place-to-Spend-time. In the context of this project, a series of postcards based on the inmates' perspectives of the island were created. This was an interesting piece of information considering we had a meeting scheduled with the work manager of the prison later.

notes | 3 Dec 2010

Skype meeting of the project team

It would be great for us to meet and to set up a meeting with maybe two or three groups that might be interested in working on something like this: group worried about pollution, cycling group, Finnish out-of-copyright comic group, local area groups.



notes | 14 Jan 2011

Meeting at HIAP

200 people come here to work every morning.
200 people go to the mainland to work.

People have their 'own' seats on the ferry.
People talk with their 'neighbour' on the ferry ride. Some people read. People always feel at home on the ferry.

Ferry = umbilical connection to the island

Ferry gives the rhythm for life in wintertime.

Navy people also get the ferry.

You can experience all kinds of things on the ferry that don't happen on a bus such as people spontaneously starting to sing—these sweet things form the perception of the island for islanders and outsiders.

14 Jan 2011

Meeting with the manager of the Suomenlinna prison

Christian I met with the work manager from the prison and was amazed that he had heard of the local currency project I had worked on in Amsterdam—the Bijlmer Euro. He told me about how the open prison works on the island. The prisoners are involved in the maintenance and renovation of the buildings of the island and even though they can be seen on the island, they must follow very strict rules of contact with the locals and tourists. We discussed the possibility of a project that would bring the prisoners and locals in closer contact with each other. He seemed really enthusiastic about some kind of collaboration. Unfortunately we never contacted him again after this meeting, perhaps because the project seemed to move towards the currency and we did not really know how to directly involve the prisoners within the project.

14 Jan 2011

Meeting at the university

Christian We had a number of meetings with the Helsinki Institute for Information Technology (HIIT) about possible collaborations. There was a possibility of having a software developer from the university working on the project. We discussed repurposing the RFID tags that are inside the Helsinki travel cards. The tags are the same Mifare Ultralight that I had worked with in the Bijlmer Euro project. For HIIT, the main focus was on mobile phone development but they were also excited about the Bio Mapping project I had done many years ago www.biomapping.net, so they showed us their biometric sensor setup. In the end nothing seemed to come from these meetings. Perhaps the RFID technology we were talking about for this project was not novel enough for them to be interested, or they would have needed external funding to get involved. I think if we would have received major funding from the World Design Capital they would have been able to work with us.

14 Jan 2011

Susanne's role changes

Susanne Before Christian and I went home, we met at Juha's place to discuss our recent activities and our next steps. During this first visit, it became clear to us that setting up a site-specific participatory project the way Christian wanted would require a lot of local expertise and the continuous presence of a producer. The next step for the project was to build connections and to identify the right group of people to work with. So Christian felt that we would first and foremost need a local producer and facilitator.

The kind of participatory model that Christian had in mind differed substantially from the projects that I had curated before. In those public art programmes such as New Zealand's Biennial of Art in Public Space, people were invited to contribute physical objects to a public sculpture, to use and adapt spaces created by artists and to give their input to an alternative city map. The public art programme that I curated at Urban Screens Manchester 07 used public screens in a performative way for multi-user gaming and as 'mirrors' to enhance local community events. These programmes used relatively simple models of interaction and participation that aimed at involving groups and individuals in temporary, social and aesthetic experiences. When I set up the Urban Interface projects in Berlin and Oslo, I tried forms of participation that demanded more time and commitment from people. A good example is Laura Beloff's work *The Head*, a mobile sculpture that people had to carry around for one week, complemented by a website for people to write about their personal experiences with *The Head*.

These projects did not expand beyond 'straightforward' forms of participation and did not demand such a high level of commitment from the project team or the community. In comparison, what Christian was suggesting for Helsinki was going to be much more like building an infrastructure or a system that could add a new local dynamic or features to support a group or collective for an extended period of time.

After discussing this model, we agreed that I would change roles and become more of a communicator for the project, while Pixelache would take on the role of the 'local agent' and producer. I was a bit disappointed that due to the above-mentioned requirements, I would not be more involved, since I had initiated this project and expected to play an active part in the process. At the same time I felt that the project was in good hands at Pixelache.

11 Feb 2011

Trying to raise more funding

Nathalie During the year 2010, it was announced that Helsinki had been chosen as World Design Capital (WDC) for 2012. In the winter 2010-2011, the World Design Capital Helsinki foundation sent out a call for projects with a deadline in February 2011. In early 2011 we decided to apply with a project focused on mapping Suomenlinna proposed by Christian. We imagined that getting support from the World Design Capital would influence to a large degree the scale and visibility of the project. We wrote a proposal entitled Suomenlinna Tamagotchi. This project outlined a concept for an island-wide sensor system that would combine the activity of humans on the island as well a variety of natural entities like the tides. We wanted to visualise the flow of visitors arriving on the island and spreading out across the island and then later streaming back towards the harbour trying to leave the island on the ferry. The aim was to visualise Suomenlinna as a living organism full of dynamic activity.

It seemed to us that the fact that none of the upcoming projects announced by WDC focused on Suomenlinna would be to our advantage. In early autumn 2011, like many others who had hoped to get support from WDC, we realised that they did not actually want to give much support to grassroots organisations and projects. We discovered (when one of the WDC producers finally had time to meet us) that our proposal had been considered 'art' and therefore not a priority for the WDC.

Feeling disillusioned and in reaction to the lack of transparency and heavy bureaucracy of WDC, a group of organisations and individuals, including Juha, who played a crucial role as facilitator, created the Alternative Design Capital initiative (ADC). ADC became a platform for open, experimental and critical practices excluded from the official programme, which the Suomenlinna Money Lab project took part in. Strictly relying on volunteer effort, ADC soon ran into sustainability issues. But it did function well as a meeting point for various grassroots organisers from the fields of art and design, as well as to promote different projects online and in the media, complementing the official WDC programme.

In retrospect we wonder what might have happened, had we received the WDC money. Would the funding have changed our way of engaging with different institutions and groups in the project?

[description](#) | 11 Feb 2011
[WDC application](#)

...By making the social dynamics of the island publicly visible, this artistic experiment enables communal representation and new interactions between the diverse users of the island...It is an innovative participatory platform that can bring people together around unique methodologies of interaction, allow new relationships between people and new communal representations to occur...

What is Suomenlinna like?

We chose the island of Suomenlinna as the location for our project knowing that it had a complex history and might be a difficult place to work. We had not found any specific group of people that had wanted to directly work with us at any other location, so we chose a physical context rather than a particular group of people to work with. Another reason we picked Suomenlinna was that the island is unique and visually striking and that it carries a mysterious possibility for experimental autonomy. We had been enrolled by the island.

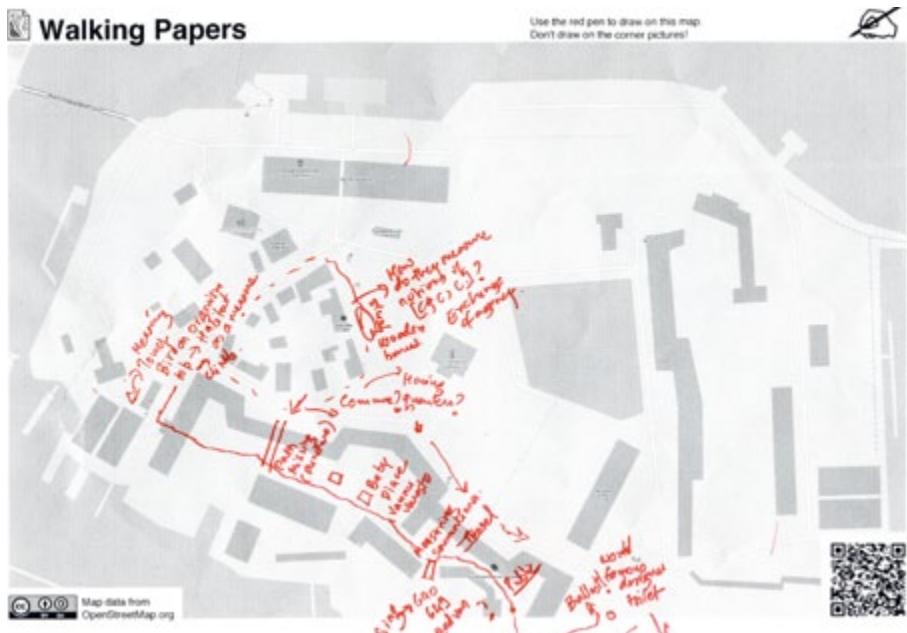
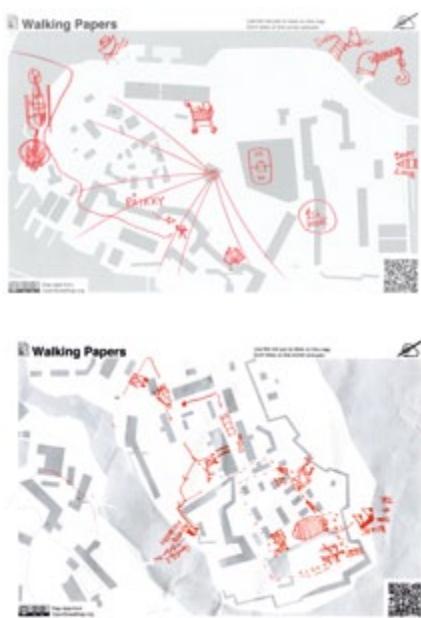


9 Mar 2011

Suomenlinna Emotion Map Workshop

Christian **Susanne** The main aim during our second visit in March 2011 was to understand Suomenlinna and to get some people together for discussions and brainstorming about what kind of project to do. We set up two events, the first of which was an Emotional Mapping workshop, since they tend to be good ways of getting groups to meet and talk about the dynamics of an area. We had problems putting up posters to promote our event, because the Governing Body has very strict rules about where posters can be placed. Only a few people showed up for the workshop at Gallery Augusta, including Sofia and Jussi, who later became supportive of the Suomenlinna Money Lab. Despite the empty gallery space, the atmosphere was informal and the workshop participants were open and friendly. After introductions, Christian handed

out the special Sensory Journeys base maps of Suomenlinna and asked the participants to annotate the maps with places that are special to them www.sensoryjourneys.net. They drew some interesting maps of what they like doing on the island and where they grow food, as well as little snippets of the history of the island. Christian particularly liked drawings of the lighthouse radiating light everywhere and of a helicopter, a ferry and a hockey goal on the ice. Nothing specific came out of the workshop but we had a positive feeling that despite the small turnout, some people seemed keen to create their own subjective representations of the island. We felt like we would have to do many more workshops in order to get a better picture of the place and its people.



9 Mar 2011

Meeting: They want to increase the rent 15% next year

Christian That evening was an event organised by the Community Association where a group of local people met to discuss their response to the rent increase that the Governing Body was threatening. Apparently all the people on the island are only renting and nobody owns their own house. The Governing Body wanted to put the rent up by 15%, and the local people were obviously outraged. The event was very busy with at least 50 people crammed into a small space. It was the first time and last time I saw lots of local people gathered together. I stood around trying to connect with the situation but since the whole event was in Finnish I found it hard. I knew that this was important and I wished I had a way of understanding what was going on.

12 Mar 2011

Brainstorm at Pixelache Festival

Christian Susanne Our second event took place three days later during the Pixelache Festival on Suomenlinna. It was announced as an informal presentation and we hoped that we would get a lot of feedback on early ideas for the project. We mainly had artists from the festival but also a few local people. Olavi, a Suomenlinna local who we had been in contact with before, had come specially to the festival to take part in the discussion. He had some really interesting ideas and talked about a whole variety of ecological concepts for Suomenlinna. He suggested creating an organic sense of economy, which for him meant something that deals with the living island as well as its history. He explained that Suomenlinna's soil is very good and that the residents grow their own food—something we had picked up from the Emotion Map workshop already. Olavi mentioned the need for an organic food market and the idea of a food co-op. The only supermarket on the island was tiny and had a poor selection of food. Everything else needed to be bought in the city and brought to the island. Olavi paraphrased this with "everyone here eats the same salami." Opening a shop

reflection by Christian | 8 Mar 2011

Suomenlinna is an incredible island. I love the crispness of the air and ground as I walk out into the snow to make a circle of the island. Walking around the island doesn't take very long and you get an amazing sense of being able to grasp hold of the entire place.

on Suomenlinna is only possible if you own the house it is in. Since the majority of the houses are city property and managed by the Governing Body, it is unlikely that a new shop or supermarket will ever be opened. In the view of the Governing Body, every additional private commercial activity distorts the picturesque image of the old fortress. More shops would improve quality of life and generate income for the residents with the tourists buying more on the island. Yet the Governing Body's policy is to keep the island as a museum first and foremost. Olavi talked a lot about how the island was being 'castrated' by all the institutional bodies that try to run it and maintain it as a historical theme park of the Swedish period of the island which even included removing the Russian porches and ripping out the thematically 'wrong' plants and a prohibition on planting trees. Since it is not permitted to have composts, residents dispose of garden waste with household waste.



During this discussion we got a clear sense of tensions on the island and the islanders' deep frustration with the difficulties of altering even the smallest things on the island. But we also heard Olavi say that "money will give everyone a headache" after Christian explained how an alternative currency could facilitate sharing among neighbours, trade with tourists and help the economy on the island. We were not quite sure what he meant but it seemed like he wanted to focus more directly on growing projects. After the workshop, we felt quite excited with lots of new ideas but based on our impression of Olavi, we didn't think he would want to develop them further with us. We realised that we would have to take the ideas forward on our own.

email from Juha | 20 Feb 2011

...Suomenlinna island is interesting, and there are many special communities there... But one thing that makes these communities less accessible is the fact that there a lot of tourists on the island—about 650,000 people visit the island annually, mostly during spring + summer + autumn... So people who live and work on the island have to struggle to keep their lives somehow private... So many of the small communities would prefer to just keep low profile rather than get involved in something that would receive attention and publicity...

Facts about the island

An overview of Suomenlinna's history

Suomenlinna—or Viapori (Finnish) or Sveaborg (Swedish) until 1918—is an inhabited sea fortress built on six islands (Kustaanmiekka, Susisaari, Iso-Mustasaari, Pikkumustasaari, Länsi-Mustasaari and Långören), which now forms part of the city of Helsinki, the capital of Finland [www.suomenlinna.fi].

The Swedish crown commenced construction of the fortress in 1748 as protection against Russian expansionism. The general responsibility for the fortification work was given to Augustin Ehrensvärd, a military officer, military architect and artist. He is seen as the founder of the Suomenlinna fortress. The fortress surrendered to Russia on May 3, 1808, during the Finnish War, paving the way for the occupation of Finland by Russian forces in 1809. (Wikipedia)

Suomenlinna, which never faced any other serious attack after this, became a prison camp for communists during the Finnish Civil War in 1917-18. In 1973, when it was no longer very practical as a military base, Suomenlinna was turned over to civilian administration. Since then, the Governing Body of Suomenlinna has administered the island.

Originally named Sveaborg (Fortress of Svea), or Viapori as called by Finns, it was renamed Suomenlinna (Castle of Finland) in 1918 for patriotic and nationalistic reasons, though it is still also sometimes known by its original name. (Wikipedia)

Suomenlinna has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1991, and is popular with both tourists and locals. It is the most visited tourist site in Finland, with over 650,000 tourists a year.

Who 'runs' Suomenlinna?

Information on Suomenlinna's official website [www.suomenlinna.fi]:

Under the Ministry of Education & Culture, the Governing Body of Suomenlinna is the agency that manages, restores and maintains the fortress. External and internal communications are managed in an open and transparent manner. The manner of interaction in the work community is open and constructive. The principles of good governance are observed in the Governing Body of Suomenlinna. The restoration, management and administration of Suomenlinna are funded with profits from the operations of the Governing Body of Suomenlinna, and with funds from the State budget. The proceeds of the bureau mainly comprise the rents of residences and facilities, income from the sale of landscape preservation services, and profits from conference and banqueting facilities. These proceeds cover approximately 60 per cent of operating costs. The extensive Suomenlinna renovation project is financed by a budget allocation from the Ministry of Justice on sites where work is carried out by inmates of the Suomenlinna Prison. The number of personnel is 90. Staffing of the Property unit nearly doubles during the summer season when there are more visitors.

The Governing Body's expenditure in 2010:

€2,925,327	Building department
€2,061,995	Open prison
€1,479,023	Real estate management
€987,000	Planning department
€613,663	Maintenance
€207,743	Cleaning

(Source: 2010 Activity Report)

The Community Association

Suomenlinnaseura (in Finnish) has about 400 members, of which around 300 live on the island. The association publishes the paper Suomenlinnan Sanomat four times a year [www.viapori.fi].

Viapori Forum

A local cultural association whose members are local artists and crafts makers.

The Ehrensvärd Society

This society stands as a kind of keeper of Suomenlinna's official historical identity and was founded in 1921. Nowadays, the Ehrensvärd Society runs the Ehrensvärd Museum and organises the official guided tours. The Ehrensvärd Society also runs several cafes around the island [www.suomenlinnatours.com/ehrensvrd_society].



The people of Suomenlinna

Different, rather disconnected groups of people 'use' the island:

- 800 residents
- About 400 people work on the island throughout the year
- 650,000 visiting Finnish and foreign tourists, who spend in general less than €10 on the island
- A large arts and crafts 'community' with over 100 members and several arts organisations
- Naval Academy: number of personnel 90 and 250 students per year
- Suomenlinna Prison houses approximately 70 inmates, many employed to renovate the fortress buildings but not allowed to have contact with the locals or the tourists

Residential life on the island is constrained (very few cars, limited food choices, fewer ferries in winter, etc.) but also idyllic in many regards (nature, quietness, no traffic, etc.), dependence on the Governing Body, who is also their landlord and recently decided on a substantial increase in rent, and who also exerts strict control over any modification to the natural and built environment.



Infrastructure

The ferry ride to the city centre takes approximately 15 minutes. During the winter period, there are only one or two ferries per hour. The ferry is very much like an umbilical connection to the mainland that defines the rhythm of the life on the island, from the hectic tourist season to the peaceful winter season.

The island has a library, a kindergarten, a school, a church, a supermarket, kiosks, cafes & restaurants, and museums. The island also has a church that became a lighthouse, unique in Europe.

The island hosts several cultural organisations (Viapori Forum, HIAP, Nordic Cultural point, the art school MAA), a few yearly festivals (Väkevä Viapori, Viapori Blues, Viapori Jazz, Les Lumières) as well as the last remaining Finnish submarine.

Results of the 2011 Finnish parliamentary election

In Suomenlinna:

- Green League 23.8%
- Left Alliance 18.8%
- National Coalition Party 17.3%
- Social Democratic Party 16.3%
- True Finns 14.2%
- Swedish People's Party 2.9%
- Centre Party 2.5%

In Helsinki:

- National Coalition Party 27.3%
- Social Democratic Party 17.5%
- Green League 16.7%
- True Finns 13%
- Left Alliance 10.4%
- Swedish People's Party 5.8%
- Centre Party 4.5%



Suomenlinna and the arts

The arts occupy a prominent position on the island. A number of contemporary art institutions were based on Suomenlinna in the past or are now. One of the most dreadful prison buildings during the Finnish civil war in 1917–1918 was renovated to become the home of the Nordic Art Centre in the mid-80s, later becoming the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art.

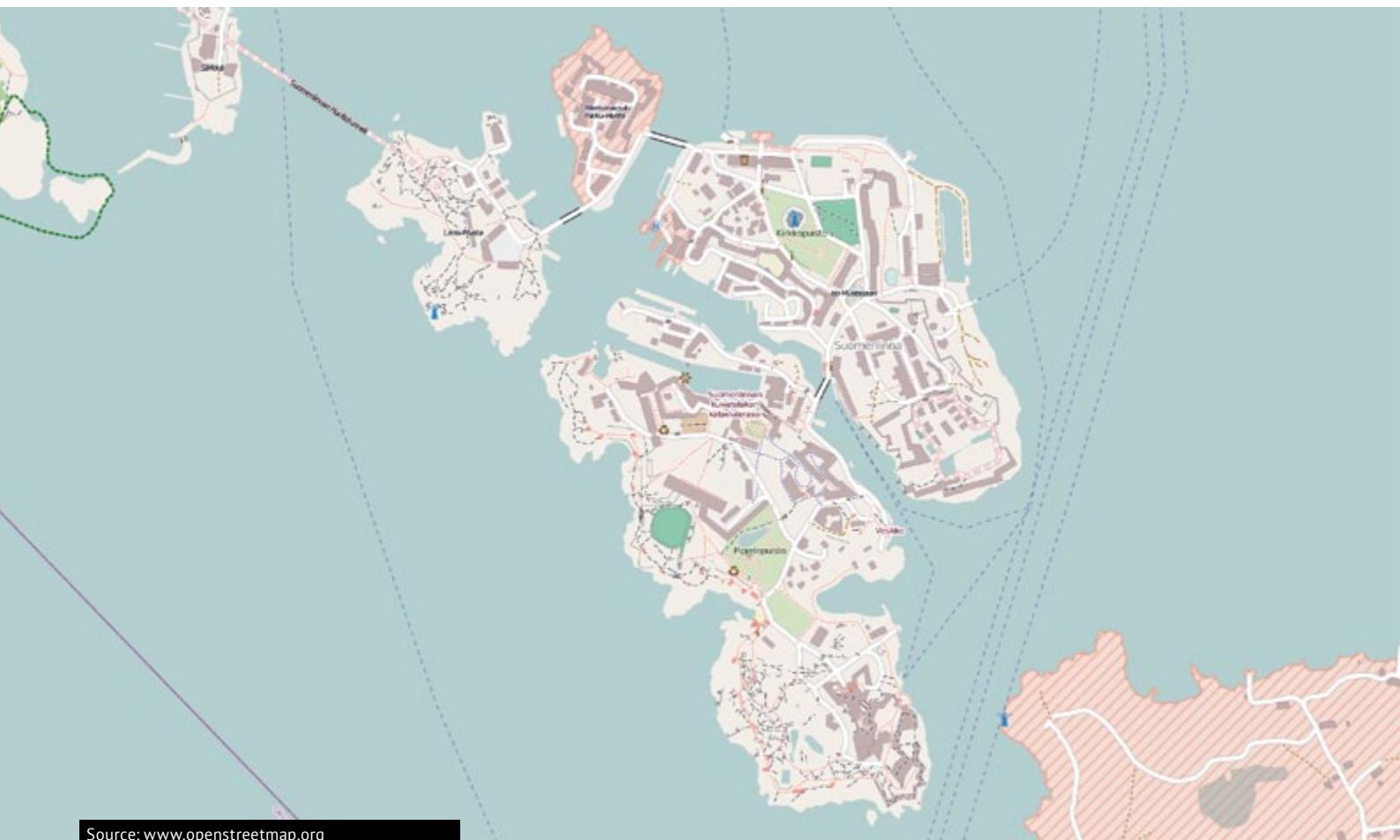
At Gallery Augusta, originally built as barracks in the 19th century, HIAP runs an exhibition and event space and has installed its office. The organisation is one of the largest facilitators of international residencies in Finland and gives 70–90 art professionals, artists and curators from various disciplines the opportunity to work for one to three months in Helsinki. The HIAP studios and guest rooms, situated in a red brick barracks building originally from the 18th century, are also available for shorter stays.

Suomenlinna is home to a private art school called MAA, founded in 1986. The school has approximately 90 students per year and is located on the premises of the old army barracks.

Several buildings have been converted into artists' studios, which are let by the Governing Body at reasonable rates. During the summer there is an art school for children. The performances of the Suomenlinna summer theatre regularly draw full houses.

Several annual festivals are also held on Suomenlinna and organised by locals, including Väkevä Viapori, Viapori Jazz (www.viaporijazz.fi/info) and Viapori Blues (www.viapori.fi/winterblues). A new cultural venue called Jääkellari was also opened in 2011. It is divided between a cafe run by a private company and a stage and an exhibition area run by the cultural association, Viapori Forum.

Despite the island being a centre of artistic production and attracting so many international art professionals, there are no traces of that outside the studios or the gallery. With so many artists spending time on the island each year an effect on Suomenlinna's appearance could be expected, but its status as a World Heritage Site prevents any artistic interventions or additions.



Source: www.openstreetmap.org



Uncovering the imaginary. On the development of a community-based art work on Suomenlinna

This year's Pixelache took place under the motto 'Hacking Suomenlinna'—a motto that might have been inspired by artist Christian Nold who has been invited to develop a project in the framework of Pixelache over the next year and decided to focus his interest on the island Suomenlinna. The following post reflects on the development of a community-based artwork on the island.

For those readers who live in Helsinki, Suomenlinna does not have to be explained, but for those like me, non-Finns, I will try to describe the place a bit. Suomenlinna is an island in the bay of Helsinki, a place of historic weight. In the distant past it was under the sovereignty of the Swedes, the Russian and was finally given back to the Finnish in 1917. Visiting the island today, you can read its cultural past from buildings and what's left of them and you can sense that this place is very special. This is maybe due to its Disneyesque character—the place is a world heritage site, a kind of open air museum and a green area (therefore a lot of effort and money, 14 million euro, is going into maintenance and preservation)—but maybe simply due to its contrast to the city.

Helsinki, like so many big cities in Europe, is characterised by an old centre, a modern fringe, high real estate prices, and a pulsating stream

art school, and finally the tourists, a few in winter and masses in summer (altogether about 650,000 p.a.)

No wonder that the Suomenlinna residents feel somewhat outnumbered and unwillingly drawn into a picturesque postcard image that the Helsinki authorities are trying to preserve—which is truly a shame, because Suomenlinna has got the potential, as a vital place of experimentation and community life, to be utopian.

Now Christian Nold is planning to 'hack' Suomenlinna. The artist believes that local communities can be empowered by the use of technology, the implementation of local systems and disclosure of structures. What first struck him about Suomenlinna was the diversity of groups on the island and the lack of communication between them. In response to this situation he began to investigate the possibility of an independent money system on the island, an experimental currency like the Bijlmer Euro that he conceived for a neighbourhood in Amsterdam last year. Such a currency could change economic and social exchange patterns and result in gains for the islanders who are facing an extreme increase in rent over the next couple of years.

Whatever Christian does in the end, the challenge for him as well as for any artist striving for sustainable effects rather than for short-term intervention is to fully understand the 'system'

into his ideas for Suomenlinna, and in particular the money project, to festival visitors and residents. An emotional debate rapidly escalated between the artist and one resident famous for his outspokenness and active involvement in the island's past and present. The resident pointed out that the people on Suomenlinna don't want to live in the frozen image of a museum island, but that they want a living island, and that the residential community has arrived at a point at which it must decide whether it wants to become a real community. "Any community," writes Lars Gertenbach in the current issue of *On Curating*, "is constituted as imaginary. Not only does it need to be capable of being experienced as a community and possessed of an external boundary that constitutes it as the specific community that it is in the first place, it also requires a notion of itself (albeit by no means always a conscious and considered one), an idea of its unity or its commonalities in the form of a quasi-image that also becomes manifest in its practices."

Art and the imaginary—it does not seem to be an impossible match on Suomenlinna or elsewhere, but the question remains as to whether art can foster the imaginary, the quasi-image, if it is not yet fully shared or if it still has to be partially evoked. Today, communities are no longer defined by sharing geographic territory, a physical place. The internet has enabled the emergence of strong, dispersed communities that are powerful and sustainable because they have organised themselves solely on the basis of a common idea, a shared passion, whereas the choice of where to live is influenced by so many external factors that it may be much harder to develop the idea of a local community together.

One thing that may unite the people living on Suomenlinna though is the limitations they are all subjected to: whatever happens on the island is rigidly controlled by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, up to the point where residents are not allowed to plant trees or to compost. While one resident stipulated that Christian's artistic intervention should first and foremost generate benefits for the residential community, he doubted the practical effect of a local money system. At the end of the meeting other economic interventions were brought up briefly, such as an organic food store, a food cooperative and a homestay system. Also Suomenlinna's historic relationship to the neighbouring Baltic countries as well as its links with the farther east were mentioned.

To me as an observer these first steps towards a community-based art project were telling in many ways. What certainly did not come as a surprise to Christian, who for years has been dealing with people's real lives and emotions, is that you have to know the 'system' that you want to generate an effect on/in very well. This means literally talking to people, gathering information of all sorts, looking into the place's nervous system and circulatory system, and even deeper into the cellular structure. It's a long and exhaustive process which requires involvement of the artist on a personal level and demands exceptional communication skills, and at the end of which Christian may well uncover the imaginary that has the power to connect not only the residents, but all those that visit and stay on the island.



of traffic. In March: shades of amplified grey. The ferry that brings you to Suomenlinna already tells you that you are now entering a different time and space continuum. The further the ferry moves from the market square, the emptier the space around you, the calmer the movement, the quieter the surroundings. In winter, the ferry ploughs its way through the ice, producing a sound that is hard to describe.

And then you arrive on the island and you feel like you are in a better place, one with (almost) no cars, wooden houses, a church that has been turned into a lighthouse, a fortress, a submarine, bridges, the sea all around you. Only at second glance might you notice the 'real' people, like the ones who actually rent houses here, or the marines who are based here since it is still a military base, or the prisoners, who also live on the island on day release. And then there are the few artists staying on the island doing residencies and those attached to the small

he is interfering with, in this case the island Suomenlinna and the forces behind the scenes as much as the various groups and communities.

The exercise of getting to know Suomenlinna started during Pixelache when Christian hosted two meetings with the aim of introducing himself and discussing his first rough ideas with residents. At the first meeting Christian asked everyone to mark the most beautiful spots on blank maps of the island. And there was indeed much to learn about the island from the eight people who had shown up, such as where they grow their vegetables and where they meet and socialise. And that a poisonous species of spiders from South America can be found on the island. The maps were quickly filled with drawings and annotations and people started to talk about their lives on the island.

The second meeting took place some days later. It was organised as a regular Pixelache event, at which Christian was to provide more insight



Who wants to work with us?

By autumn 2011 we felt it was crucial to gather a critical mass of people interested in building and realising the project with us. Christian came to Helsinki for a third and fourth time. We set up meetings with people we wanted to involve in the project and planned some workshops and a public presentation. One of the most fruitful meetings during Christian's September visit was with Riitta, an elementary school teacher. She was really excited about organising a workshop with the kids. We also started planning for Väkevä Viapori, which is a neighbourhood festival that takes place on Suomenlinna and attracts lots of visitors each year. We thought that the festival would be an ideal time to communicate the project and to get feedback from both the residents and the tourists. In the course of our autumn activities we saw a lot of interest and enthusiasm but we were also confronted with reservation and what looked like opposition.

15 July 2011

The Suomenlinna Money Lab is taking shape

Christian Olavi had talked about some heady ideas of an organic economy for Suomenlinna. There seemed to be lots of performative concepts that could combine food growing with time banking and plant ecology. We were open for anyone to propose some concrete collaboration but we felt that we had to set up a more structured process for ourselves. So I wrote a project plan for the Suomenlinna Money Lab as an evolving research project with multiple stages that could become more defined as the project progressed and enrolled more entities.

description | 15 July 2011

Internal concept for the Suomenlinna Money Lab

The Suomenlinna Money Lab explores the island as a place of social, cultural and economic contact and exchange. The concept is to focus on 'local money' as a social medium for people and a localised object that shapes and represents a geographical place. The plan is to set up a series of workshops and experiments that investigate different ways that the social and geographical combine to create 'local value'. The project will run in an open and participatory context, so anyone is free to join in and help direct the research.

The project will start with a more classic art project and depending on people's reactions may culminate in a full local currency/time-bank or move more towards a green ecology type project.

Suomenlinna Euro Version 1

(SYMBOLIC BANKNOTE)

1 The idea is to design a banknote for Suomenlinna. The design of the note takes place through a series of brainstorm/design sessions ideally with the Finnish currency designer living on the island and/or another local designer. The idea is that this symbolic note becomes a talking point and focus for discussing value and how it flows. 2 At the same time we will carry out workshops for discussing 'value' on the island and how it might be captured/transposed-shifted with a local currency.

The idea is that these two elements can be merged into a *spine object* (Bruce Sterling 2004) that connects the discussion to the physical banknote. The current plan is for a 'story banknote'. People on the ferry or in the island cafes are given the Suomenlinna Euro. As well as an image identity and explanation of the project, the note contains a unique printed QR code which people are invited to scan with their phone. When they do, it takes them to a special website. On that website they will be asked where they received the banknote and to enter

a short story of their experiences with money/ the economy and the island. After they have contributed, people are encouraged to pass on the 'banknote' to someone else. The next person to log onto that banknote's URL sees the stories and can comment on them.

It might be a bit like this:

- 1 Please scan this tag or log onto this webpage and tell us where you received the note.
- 2 Write us a personal experience you have had on Suomenlinna.
- 3 Pass the note onto someone else.

During the life of this project, the project team will have access to all the URLs and can see where the notes move to—geographically (via people's text entry) as well as seeing all the stories being generated. One result from the project could be a small booklet with some of the maps + stories, which we then distribute on the island. This project would be a cheap and low threshold way get people talking about a local currency. The problem is how to condense the complex ideas of local value/money/resilience onto a small banknote...

The webpage for each banknote could have a banknote graphic showing the note getting bigger in size with every comment and story that has been added. So we could have a measurement at the side showing that after ten stories the virtual banknote would have grown to one metre long...

The idea of using smartphones with the QR code + web address could be supplemented by having a computer station on the ferry where people can scan the QR code and type their messages. So there can be a more physical thing to the project. (Not sure what the metaphor would be for the base station.)

Juha, can you think of a way in which we could create and manage 1000 editable urls? Perhaps we could connect this project with Tallinn?

Suomenlinna Euro Version 2

(Local Discount / Treasure Hunt / RFID card)

The next stage of the project could be based on another version of the banknote. Perhaps this version allows you to get a free coffee on the island in one of the cafes or perhaps in someone's house. We could buy 100 discounted coffees from the various places on the island and use it as a kind of promotion/exploration/reward. This version could make use of people's RFID travel ticket in some way to follow their use/movement on the island. The idea is to slowly move from a cosy art project towards something that might have some economic, social or ecological impact on the island.

Suomenlinna Euro Version 3

(Full Local Currency?)

This could work similar to the Bijlmer Euro where we use RFID travel cards as a local discount cards. Perhaps this could be a maker currency linking together local makers in Tallinn, Helsinki and Suomenlinna, etc. I am working on a cheaper version of the RFID readers which would use Ethernet—this would make them cheaper to build and run as well as more reliable. Anyway this all depends on the first two stages and how they proceed...

Concept

We could mint new Suomenlinna coins from old Swedish metal from the island. For example we could ask people to donate their old keys that they have lying around.

"British people carry an average of nine keys around with them, but can identify only six of those, with no idea where the other three came from, or what they unlock..."

www.theregister.co.uk/2011/03/11/average_keys

24 Aug 2011

Three positive meetings on the island

Nathalie Sushi and I spent the day on Suomenlinna. Our first appointment was with Mauno, a famous graphic designer who illustrated the Finnish banknotes that were eventually replaced by the euro. He has lived on Suomenlinna for 20 years. Mauno is 85 already, extremely friendly, still very active professionally. We arranged our meeting by phone since he does not really use computers.

We went to his place and knocked on the door. A friendly and smiley old man appeared at the threshold and showed us his home before inviting us to sit in his studio. Mauno's wooden house has an amazing location, right on the edge of the water, facing the city. The living room, with windows to the sea, is both colourful and peaceful. This place definitely has a soul. After we sat down in his studio and explained our vision of a currency for Suomenlinna, we asked him whether he would be interested to work on the design of the currency. He seemed quite excited by the idea. It felt a bit difficult though to keep him on the track of the discussion as he tended to drift away, telling stories of the past. He showed us different designs representing Suomenlinna (posters, stamps etc.), mostly commissioned by the Ehrensvärd Society. He also told us stories about the design of the Finnish banknote with a gleam in his eye. Before shaking hands with him, we agreed we could meet again, next time with Christian. We left with presents from Mauno such as postcards of his banknotes and books.

Following this promising encounter we met with Jussi at the recently opened Cafe Jääkellari, 'the ice cellar', one of his many projects. Jääkellari is run in part by the association Viapori Forum (for the exhibitions and events part) and a private company (for the cafe activity). Jussi is a very active cultural organiser on the island. He is the producer of three important music and culture festivals taking place on Suomenlinna, including Väkevä Viapori. Jussi was one of the participants in Christian's workshop during Pixelache and said the project "is really interesting". When we arrived he was already sitting at a table in the cafe, speaking on the phone. This man must be busy! During our meeting, he explained that Jääkellari would be used for exhibitions and events, and especially by the members of Viapori Forum to exhibit their work. With enthusiasm we told him about our meeting with Mauno. Jussi explained that Mauno is also a member of Viapori Forum and has an exhibition coming up in Jääkellari, as part of the World Design Capital. I mentioned to Jussi the idea of organising a few workshops on the island in relation to our project, and asked if we could possibly organise one at the cafe. He was positive about it.

Our final meeting was with representatives from the Governing Body of Suomenlinna. We were hoping that the new director of this organisation would be able to attend, but she

could not make it to the meeting. Instead we met Sari who was responsible for the conference and banquet facilities as well as Kirsti, the tourist coordinator. We knew Sari already, as she had been our main contact at the Governing Body during the preparation of the 2011 edition of the Pixelache Festival, which took place on Suomenlinna. We started the meeting with a debriefing about the last festival and then presented our ideas about a local currency for Suomenlinna. They seemed open about it, even though they thought it might be difficult to get people involved. We agreed that we would keep them informed about the project developments. After this meeting ended, we had the feeling that the day had gone well and that bright horizons were opening up.



notes | 24 Aug 2011
Meeting with the Governing Body

About Christian's project: Their main concern is that there has been a lot of interest in Suomenlinna lately (for example the branding project www.suomenlinnahuomenna.fi and many others) so many locals (inhabitants as well as entrepreneurs) might be already a bit tired and it might not be so easy to get them involved.

Learning about money design from the famous designer

Christian Nathalie We thought getting Mauno involved was going to be very important since he was the creator of the visionary designs of the old Finnish money. We hoped we could recruit him to design the Suomenlinna currency for us. We also thought getting Mauno involved was going to be pivotal for the publicity of the project because he was such a famous designer. We realised that we would not be able to pay him a large fee but we hoped because it was his local island and since he used drawings of the island on his old banknotes that he might be excited to get involved.

Suvi, who accompanied us, had arranged this second meeting by phone. Yet in between our meetings, something had clearly happened, since Mauno seemed reluctant to confirm the proposed date and hour for the second meeting, this time with Christian.

When we arrived, Mauno opened the door and took us to his small studio, which the three of us squeezed into. The interview itself was very positive. He was very polite and seemed to really enjoy talking about his work. He showed us some of his famous designs from the past as well as some of the work he had completed recently. Even at this age he was still very active taking multiple new design commissions. He told us an amazing story about the 'internationalism' of the island,



when in the past different nations sailed to Suomenlinna and fired a million tonnes of cannonballs onto the island. A weird kind of internationalism. As we left his house he gave us one of his books that contained all his designs and even one of the cannonballs he had found in the soil of his garden.

After the meeting we felt really excited. It seemed if Mauno would design the money that we would get beautiful banknotes and an enormous amount of publicity for the project. Everybody knows him and he is so closely associated with his design of the old Finnish money. The visit ended up becoming the basis for the article that Christian wrote for a local Finnish magazine (see following chapter). At this point none of us had any idea that this visit was going to be so pivotal and would generate such strong emotions and rumours.

Mauno's proposal for the official euro design competition



8 Sept 2011

Discussing time banking

Christian We met with Paula who set up the timebank in Helsinki www.aikapankit.fi. It allows people to exchange services on a one-to-one basis, where one hour of my time is worth one hour of your time. So people use it for supporting each other with personal services that they would not want to charge money for. It was great to meet Paula because she raised the question of introducing an online timebank instead of a currency with physical banknotes. She told us there are already a few people from Suomenlinna who have signed up on the timebank website. We thought that this could be a really useful direction to explore further.

Reflecting back now that our project is finished, this meeting raised some interesting differences between a timebank and the project we had planned. Timebank schemes are based on social relationships between people and need to start from basic social exchange. 'I'll teach you yoga, if you fix my computer.' These type of projects have been around for decades and are self-limiting by the extent of their geographical community. They work really well and can provide real benefits for people but they are not futuristic and don't need to be. There is very little need to mediate these relationships in terms of artefacts or aesthetic material. In some sense they don't seem to need these extra levels of representation.

While we promoted the idea of a timebank with people on Suomenlinna it never seemed to gain any real momentum during discussions, so we didn't pursue it much further.

notes | 8 Sept 2011

Timebank meeting

Timebank Finland: Today over 900 members—in 2009 close to 2000 hours exchanged. It is used for traditional exchanges (childcare, website design). There are 21 timebanks in Finland. The most important thing is to know what people's needs are. It's about trust. It's easier to offer something, cause that's what you do anyway. People are nervous about putting their needs on the website. Offering a service for timebanking is easier. Cultural issues in this...

Question: Why are people involved in these? For social, economic reasons? Who are the people?

People who need certain help, but all kinds of people, curiosity. Diverse. Economically enabling. Social aspect as important. Finland has one of the highest participation rates in social economy in the world. People volunteer a lot in Finland. A lot of it goes into helping your neighbour. Research needed to value this.

In regards to Suomenlinna, what could the military, prisoners and tourists provide for each other? Challenge these communities? Enabling cultural misunderstandings?

announcement | 8 Sept 2011

Local Value Workshop

What if Suomenlinna had its own currency? Money carries social and cultural value that is more than monetary. What does 'local' value mean in the context of the island? Join us for an informal discussion, to share your personal stories, utopian ideas of the island and brainstorm some projects. Two independent workshops will guide the planning process of the Suomenlinna Money Lab. Anybody who is interested is warmly welcome to participate! There are no specific skills required and it's free!

8 Sept 2011

Workshop at the library and nobody turns up

Christian **Nathalie** For Christian's September visit we set up two workshops that we promoted with posters and emails sent to the Community Association mailing list. The workshop that we organised at the small library on the island was a failure because nobody showed up! We ended up sitting at the table in the children's section of the library all by ourselves, disappointed and a bit confused. Was the problem that people did not hear about the event, or that they didn't want to come?

9 Sept 2011

Workshop at Jääkellari: a breakthrough!

Christian **Nathalie** We set up the second workshop at Jääkellari where Jussi, Teppo, a resident from the island a curator from HIAP, and a student came along. Jussi and Teppo were both very enthusiastic about the project. For us this workshop was extremely important. At this meeting we were still a little vague but due to Teppo and Jussi's energy for the project, it suddenly seemed totally possible to create the currency. We spent a few hours brainstorming and sketching out how the money system would function. Jussi, Teppo and everybody else there were smiling because it all seemed so obvious and simple and would make such sense on this island. All the ideas discussed during this workshop became the basis for all the decisions and all the work that was carried out later. With Jussi on board we could introduce the local currency as part of one of his festivals. Within a couple of hours brainstorming we had clarified the whole system and started to talk about how the steering group would function to govern the project. After the meeting we were very excited since we felt we had met the core group of people who we could work with and we could just go ahead and start setting things up!

Audio recordings of the Jääkellari workshop

Teppo: I have been living here for 10 years ... I have always been interested in local currencies and exchange moving away from a centralised monetary system. I am thinking local exchange with people on a community basis is a better way to go. It's already happening now, with new technologies, which make things more possible. I am involved with different kinds of idealistic think tanks.

Using local tokens for exchange

Jussi: If someone helps to carry the chairs at Viapor Jazz for example, we give him 20 [Suomenlinna] Euro, then he can go to a restaurant, and the restaurant sends the bill to us, to get 'real' euros. That should also work in the school. Small services for the children's parents and then children could finance their class trip.

Christian: The thing you talked about is a good system ... The idea of the token is twofold: one is to restrict where the money is going to be spent. ... It also has an identity dimension, creating a relationship between the event and the shops ... creating a bit of a network.

Jussi: We have used a similar system for many years ... but only between the festival and let's say the restaurant.

Incentives and the beauty of money

Jussi: In order to make people want to change the money, there must be some incentive, like the money goes to charity or something.

Christian: The money becomes a souvenir, something that is actually attractive.

Jussi: In the Russian and Swedish periods ... there was a baker who had a currency of his own. It was valid in those days in downtown Helsinki ... but no example survived.

Teppo: On the point of beautiful currency, I've been attracted to this artist from Holland ... He has set up the exhibition change bank. The notes are very psychedelic notes. I would buy these just for the beauty of these notes ... If enough people were involved with this ... we could just exchange this.

Jussi: I bought 2 Zimbabwe banknotes last week in Alexanderinkatu ... The notes cost 20 euro each ... but they are not valid anywhere ... If Mauno will make this money here ... people will buy it just as a souvenir.

How to get people involved

Teppo: Are we serious about setting up a currency here? Or is it just talking about concepts?

Christian: Well, personally, I am really up for this but I am a bit worried that we don't have more of the people here from the island. So that's my main question.

Jussi: Maybe one reason why there are not more people here, is because they think that the Money Lab comes from this Pixelache and they don't know what it means. But afterwards when they hear that Mauno will design the money ... because he comes from the island, that's a key thing.

Juhu: But maybe it would be better to make it more clear that something is actually going to happen next year, instead of saying something is perhaps going to happen.

Jussi: I see the connection between this project and Mauno's exhibition next year at Jääkellari.

Christian: How do we reach this bigger mass of people?

Jussi: Suomenlinnan Sanomat (local newspaper) goes to every mail box.

Juhu: If this thing would be realised and if you have a local business (cafe, services), you can join this thing and you are part of this campaign ... Then whoever is interested in promoting whatever they do, would be wanting to join ... Probably then we would not need to hunt for people ... If the Mauno thing works then the word would spread.

Teppo: We would need a good website as well.

Christian: In my experience we almost need an article in CNN so that people realise something is happening in their local area ... In order to get people involved, perhaps we should be thinking about the national newspaper.

Juhu: There is a good chance we can get another article in Helsingin Sanomat.

Getting official approval

Juhu: Mauno is interested in the project but he seems concerned by how much the Governing Body and the Ehrensvärd Society are supporting the project. For him, since he has been working a lot with these organisations, he would like to see them officially approving this project.

Teppo: If he wants that kind of 'go ahead' from the Governing Body ... We should approach them and show them that he is involved with it, then immediately the credibility goes up for the project. All they have to do is approve it, they don't have to get involved with it.

Juhu: Mauno is now holding back and wants to understand.

Jussi: I can ask him because he is very involved in our, this ...

Teppo: It would not hurt to have the blessing of the Governing Body.

Jussi: I don't want to interfere with this, but if Mauno is not in, then how will we get the islanders excited about the project? They won't get excited about Pixelache ...

Juhu: The project should not depend on getting the Governing Body or Ehrensvärd on board.

Jussi: The Governing Body is the king of the island and the Ehrensvärd Society is the oldest society on the island.

Juhu: Does it mean they have most members?

Jussi: No.

Nathalie: We organised Pixelache last year on Suomenlinna, so we have a good relationship to the Governing Body, and we met them again two weeks ago, they were wondering what it's all about, but they were open to the project ...

Christian: I don't care which organisations are involved ... but we need to make sure that whatever organisation is involved that they don't stop the diversity aspect ... We need to tell them this is a beneficial project but they may not have total control over it. I don't think there is a conflict of interest ...

Teppo: I can't see where there would be a conflict.

Juhu: It's very normal when you do a project involving several communities and organisations, you have to move slowly, so that you can get everybody involved, so they feel ownership and feel it's their project, that it's not to somebody else pushing. We need to have enough discussion with all the partners so they understand what's going on ... Then it starts moving further.

Jussi: The role of Governing Body would be to give an ok but they won't get involved ... Do you know about the Community Association?

Teppo: The Community Association would be good to involve. That's the society that represents the residents.

Different models of a currency

Christian: We've been meeting with the person from the Helsinki timebank. They seem to be pretty successful ... There are now 21 timebanks around Finland for services exchange without physical banknotes. I do a service for you and I get time credit ...

Jussi: There are many active communities on the island ... Over 100 people working in the cultural field on the island.

Christian: There are lots of different models that could work for here and the idea of this meeting is to explore these different models.

Teppo: I was thinking of a model that doesn't have any correlation to any other currency ... You could buy Didgeridoo lessons with the local currency.

Christian: Suddenly this souvenir has people attached to it [in the case of the Didgeridoo lesson] ... Let's imagine this makes some money, then it would be important to set up a group of people who administer this locally ... Is that a good way of starting this up?

Juhu: What we could do as one-to-two year experiment ... Pixelache can pay for the design of the note and we print it on specific paper ... It would be valid just for a certain time period.

Christian: I would not put an expiry date on the banknote.

Jussi: For example, if the Jääkellari art shop is the place where you can change euros into Viapor Jazz, the art shop buys them from somewhere ... The banker doesn't guarantee in how many places on the island the money is valid.

Christian: The incentive is: beautiful object + slight discount, that's the selling point, yeah?

Juhu: As a third element, I find the didgeridoo lessons a key element ... bonus discoveries, something that people on the island would not normally find.

Christian: What I like is that suddenly you have this thing that combines the history of the place and the people.

Jussi: Local restaurants already offer discounts, if you buy their local customer card. It gives a discount for each beer for example.

Christian: Is there a local price and a tourist price?

Jussi: Yes there is! ... Like for the waterbus with the Suomenlinna resident card, ... or pizza in Walhalla. [People are using the resident card]



that proves you live here as a kind of discount card already.]

Teppo: Even though it's not made for that purpose.

Christian: So why don't we sell residents cards to people on the ferry? ... How would we feel about something that was a bit more performative [mobile furnace and minting coins]?

Nathalie: We are organising a workshop with children at the time of Väkevää Viapori.

Jussi: That's a good one! ... To work with the children ... Maybe I can help you with that in this case ... I will speak to the headmaster. People will go if there is something involving kids in Väkevää Viapori ... People like 'riding on the children' here.

Christian: How about if we make a few symbolic coins by melting down cannonballs to create a spectacle. Then the coin can work with the banknote. So the banknote is the economical part of the project while the coin is the spectacle bit ... Would you be interested in having an exhibition of the children's money designs from the school workshop? Could we do it here?

Jussi: Yes of course! ... You could put the exhibition during Väkevää Viapori ... We have to make something out of it then, of course! ... Mauno could even come and see it.

Christian: How do we relate to the open prison?

Jussi: They will be making the fake money!

Christian: The prison work manager we met was interested in the project ... Do you know any of the people from the military academy?

Jussi: I know a few, but I think they won't be interested in that kind of thing.

Christian: Could we find something to back the money that might interest them? ... They have Finland's biggest sauna ... It could be backed by sauna business ... Thinking of something being backed by something else is a way to include communities ...

Is there some kind of service the prisoners can provide that would include them in this?

Teppo: I was more thinking of a model, where once it gets launched, then people can come along.

Jussi: They organise army sauna visits during Väkevää Viapori.

Juha: Imagining there would be this currency operating in Suomenlinna ... The point that would make things interesting would be if somebody from the mainland wanted to join ... and they would start taking the Suomenlinna currency as well ... If there would be associations based on affinities ... in terms of the community development, that would be really interesting.

Christian: The idea of an affinity is really exciting because that really promotes Suomenlinna ... That should be the way we promote it to the Governing Body ... We've moved a long way in this discussion. We now have a model, for tourists we have a souvenir ... For those who want to spend their souvenir it becomes a money system that allows them a small discount in the shops. For local people it can become a local currency that they can use to buy services ... It can spread out to Helsinki with people / groups

who have an affinity with Suomenlinna ... It's all linked by something that spreads the identity of Suomenlinna further ... We might have a note designed by Mauno and maybe a coin forging performance ...

reflection by Christian | 10 Sept 2011

We can't make the project depend on Mauno's involvement. We need to make the politics of this place visible and talk to Ehrensvärd. If we don't back it with real money then the project could be cheaper and we wouldn't need a hologram or other security features. We need to explore the souvenir side of it... Also the legal issues need to be looked at closely since people seem to be worried about this.

9 Sept 2011

Visit to the Ehrensvärd Museum

Nathalie Just before leaving the island we visited the Ehrensvärd Museum, which is full of amazing artefacts of Augustin Ehrensvärd's life in the 18th century. It includes a manual written by Ehrensvärd for the design of a new hand grenade, as well as many of his watercolour paintings and his poetry. When we came out of the museum Christian was excited and said with a big grin: "I am not sure how the Ehrensvärd Society can oppose this project, their founder was an artist and warrior—a renaissance man. We got their founder by the balls. He was a fucking artist."

17 Oct 2011

The Ehrensvärd Society stays officially neutral, or rather indifferent

Nathalie The Ehrensvärd Society is a fairly powerful organisation on the island. It functions as a kind of keeper of Suomenlinna's official historical identity. Ehrensvärd—military officer, architect and artist—was the founder of the Suomenlinna fortress during the 18th century. Nowadays, the Ehrensvärd Society runs the museum, owns several cafes and organises the official guided tours of the island. Alternative guided tours are not allowed by the Governing Body and nobody talks about the Russian history of Suomenlinna.

Suvi and I met Maria from the Ehrensvärd Society at the Suomenlinna Museum. I was slightly anxious about this meeting, since Mauno's attitude towards the project seemed to have changed. From what he told us, it seemed that this confusion arose through a discussion he had with somebody from the Ehrensvärd Society.

For all these reasons, the outcome of this meeting was going to be important, and I hoped it would clarify the position of the Ehrensvärd Society towards the project. The meeting turned out to be quite short. Maria said that they are not interested in participating in the process at this stage because they are overworked. However she explained that they do not have anything against it and will follow its developments. Officially, the Ehrensvärd Society was adopting neutrality as a position.

20 Oct 2011

Tension before the festival

Nathalie Väkevä Viapori is the neighbourhood festival organised by Jussi, which takes place on Suomenlinna every autumn. Shortly before the festival, we had set up a simple website and printed leaflets to better communicate our project. For Väkeva Viapori, Suvi had negotiated with the Governing Body that we could have a stand in order to test our local currency idea during the event. In case of good weather it was agreed that we would put up a stand outdoors next to the Siwa food store in a very public location. In case of bad weather it would be installed inside the kiosk close to the harbour.

Suddenly, however, two days before the event and despite the good weather forecast, the Governing Body informed us in a rather abrupt way that we had misunderstood them and that we had to be located inside the kiosk. Was this the Governing Body interfering with the project? Suvi found this rather unsettling. It was around that time that Nathalie called Jussi to invite him to visit our stand at the weekend. Jussi who used to be very enthusiastic about the project suddenly had a different tone of voice with an unfriendly edge to it, and he explained that he would not have time to see us. This was all rather puzzling.

email from Juha | 11 Sept 2011

About priorities ... If we aim to realise an actual, functional local currency in Suomenlinna, I guess we should aim to realise something that benefits the local artisans and inhabitants ... Instead of giving the main benefit for Ehrensvärd Society and the Governing Body. I guess one rather high priority issue is to try to compile a list of local businesses, musicians, artisans, etc.?

So the next steps would be:

- 1 We try to gather a critical mass of local organisations, entrepreneurs and people who say that they want a local currency
- 2 We find a suitable organisation to be responsible for issuing the money (or maybe it's a coalition of several organisations)
- 3 This organisation takes the main responsibility, we support the production and communication (design of the notes, blog, etc.)
If we don't reach step (1) then I'm not sure if we want to go ahead with realising the currency...?

email from Christian | 7 Oct 2011

...For me there seems to be about a 50% chance that we get enough local enthusiasm for the full currency...

21 Oct 2011

The workshop at the art school MAA

Nathalie About ten people took part in the workshop, including art students and Pixelache friends. We hoped that this workshop could help build concepts of how the students might contribute to the project. At the beginning Christian spent some time presenting his work and preliminary ideas about the project, and then the brainstorming started. Some of the conversations revolved around the question of the official history of Suomenlinna versus alternative histories, and around how the money could be used to represent them. Somebody suggested the idea of 'ghost money' that would force people to confront the most unpleasant history of Suomenlinna, of the time of the Finnish civil war, when it was a prison camp for communists. This person imagined a banknote telling the story of a woman prisoner

on the island during that period. Someone else proposed that a currency could emphasise personal interaction by enabling local people to have personal contact with the artists. Others proposed that the students' graduation works could be sold in the local currency. There was also a suggestion to abandon the idea of a central bank and go for a fully peer-to-peer system between individuals and organisations. The problem of access to food on the island also came up during the brainstorming session with the idea of an affordable organic food club or box scheme for the island. While these were exciting ideas and everyone was very positive and we created a relationship with the art school, nothing specific came out of this event.



21 Oct 2011

A disconcerting overheard phone conversation

Nathalie A few days after the meeting with the Ehrensvärd Society I was walking across the island towards Ehrensvärd Square when I came across the spokeswoman of the Governing Body, who was walking down the road and talking on her mobile phone. She was concentrating on her conversation and did not notice me. But as our paths crossed I overheard her saying in a rather assertive way "Emme halua olla mukana tässä projektissa!" which means: "We do not want to be involved in this project!" I immediately thought she must be talking about our project. Perhaps I was paranoid but the Suomenlinna local paper had just published

a full-page article about our project and this didn't feel like coincidence. Who could she have been talking to? To some colleague at the Governing Body or some other Suomenlinna organisation? Did the Governing Body feel that they needed to take a clear stand against us at this stage? I kept on walking, feeling nervous.

email from Teppo | 8 Sept 2011

Planning discounts for the Väkevä Viapori festival

Hi Suvi!

I think your idea is great! I would be happy to give a few lessons and be reimbursed by Pixelache. Wow, Suomenlinna money is already in action (sort of)! One question: how would you decide who gets the tokens? Would it be a drawing or something like that?

This is really good for my business and exposure on Suomenlinna as well. I could even come by the booth and play some didgeridoo from time to time. Often I have played at Väkevä Viapori but don't have anything scheduled this year so that could be my artistic contribution :)

Thanks and keep up the good work!

email from Juha | 17 Oct 2011

Planning for the festival

I think a question that we might be asked by the Suomenlinna folks during the Väkevä Viapori weekend is whether we want to work with the Governing Body of Suomenlinna or the Community Association. If there is some financial profit from this project then who will get the profits? It would be great to be able to work with all the key organisations on the island, but this will be challenging, due to existing conflicts of interest.

So—if we would more clearly take a stand, that we are on the side of the inhabitants (and therefore the Community Association should be our key partner) then we might be able to get more concrete ideas and suggestions. Or, if we want to have both the inhabitants and the Governing Body involved, then we need to start coming up with some concrete scenarios of how this collaboration might work.

22 Oct 2011

Enthusiasm at the Väkevä Viapori festival

Christian Nathalie At the start of the Väkevä Viapori weekend, we set up our stand in the seating area of the small kiosk. The kiosk is situated inside the arches of an 18th century military building, which is amazing, but has a very down-to-earth atmosphere. When the weather is bad, this is where people wait for the ferry to arrive. At the kiosk they sell coffee and tea as well as some old-fashioned souvenirs of the island such as postcards and bottle openers. The place feels like a small rural post office where the person behind the counter provides a large variety of local services. They even act as the informal cash point of the island.

We took over the kiosk as our base and put up our Suomenlinna Money Lab banner outside and set up our stall in the seating area amongst the people waiting for the ferry. We strung a fishing line from corner to corner to hang the money drawings made by the children during the school workshop (see following chapter) as well as some large prints of the old Finnish money designed by Mauno. Throughout the day, Teppo played his didgeridoo, which vibrated and boomed through the old military building and transformed the space. The clash of cultures created a very eerie but warm atmosphere that people seemed to engage with. We gave out vouchers that would give people a free didgeridoo lesson with Teppo as well as vouchers for a free coffee from Jääkellari cafe. The idea was that people would be personally drawn into experiencing the local currency, little by little.

We had printed leaflets, which included a detailed description of the project as well as a questionnaire. The survey asked people if they thought the currency was a good idea and to suggest a name for the currency. Every hour when the ferry arrived we jumped out of the kiosk with leaflets in our hands and ran towards the visitors as they poured

from the ferry. During the weekend we managed to distribute hundreds of leaflets and had conversations with at least a hundred people including both islanders and visitors.

FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE

Free Cup of Coffee at the new Jääkellari Cafe

... well nothing is ever quite free. You have to promise to have an honest chat with us about the local currency!

This voucher is valid until the 10th of November 2011

FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE

Free 1 hour Didgeridoo lesson with the local musician Robin Dewan contact him on <><><>

... well nothing is ever quite free. You have to promise to have an honest chat with us about the local currency!

This voucher is valid until the end of 2011

FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE FREE

Please let us what you think. Fill this in and put it into the container provided. Thanks!

My name: _____

My email address: _____

Do you think this local money is a good idea? YES NO

I think a good name for the local currency would be: _____

How would you like to get involved? Buying local things or services Selling things locally Promoting the project

Do you have any other thoughts about this project?

There is also an electronic version of this on the www.viapori.net website

It seemed surreal talking to tourists who had arrived from all over the world. They were extremely positive about the project. Some people even told us about other alternative currency systems across the world. We met a number of locals who were excited about the idea of the timebank. We also gathered suggestions from locals on where the profits should be used to improve the island. There was only one local person who disapproved of the banknote designs we had hung up. Overall the results from the 39 filled-in questionnaires were that 100% of people who had an opinion thought the project was a good idea and wanted to use the actual currency.



SUOMENLINNA MONEY LAB

Oma raha Suomenlinnaan!



description | 22 Oct 2011

Results of the Väkevä Viapori survey

39 questionnaires filled in

Do you think it would be a good idea for Suomenlinna to have its own currency?

90% said Yes

0% said No

10% did not answer the question

27 people would buy local goods & services

11 people would sell local goods & services

8 people would promote the project

How to use the profit:

- fix the swimming beach

What good comes out of this:

- more local small entrepreneurs

- lunch varieties

- luring more tourists

- more trading of local goods and services

Ideas for small favours to trade:

- dog-sitting

- carrying heavy equipment

- bike repair

- window cleaning

- fresh vegetables from gardens

Other points

- Suomenlinna needs a bank

- Suomenlinna needs to create an independent

monetary system to survive the global economic crisis

Do you think it would be a good idea for Suomenlinna to have its own currency?

YES NO NAME SUGGESTION BUY SELL PROMOTE

x	Vinspor	x			
x	Bastoori	x	x	x	x
	Smarkka & Spenni	x	x	x	x
x	Smarkka & Spenni	x	x	x	x
	Markka				
x	Viapori		x		
x	Viapori		x		
	Viapori				
x	Taaleri	x			
	Viapenny	x			
x		x			
x	Suomenlinnan Kruunu	x			
	Linnamarkka		x		
x	Kuula	x			
x	Suomen Markka				
x	Taaleri	x			
x	Suokki	x			
x	Viapori	x			
x	Viapori	x			
x	Borg / Svea				
x	Viapori	x			
x	Viapori	x		x	
x		x			
x	Viaporina	x			
x		x	x		
x	Suokki	x			
x	Su Money (Suma)	x			
x	Sura	x			
x	Viapori		x		
x	Suomen				
x		x			
x	?	x			
	Suomenlinnan Markka	x			
x	Suliva				
x	Suomeni	x	x	x	x
x	Suomoney	x	x	x	x
x	The Suomenlinna / The Linna				

ONLINE ANSWERS

x	Via-Lantti	x			
x		x	x	x	x

notes | 22 Oct 2011

People's comments at Väkevä Viapori

I think it's wrong to exhibit Mauno's money next to the children's drawings. His son wouldn't like it. I really don't care about this project. I haven't given it any more thought. But in a way I think it's a funny idea. However I am not interested.
-Retired graphic designer living on the island

I think it's a great idea!
-Shopkeeper of the arts and crafts shop (next to Panimo Restaurant) at the Suomenlinna harbour

Really good idea but who will benefit the most on the island? We need more tourist services and products on the island that are attractive to tourists.

-Long-time ex-resident who works in IT services and sales

I have not made up my mind.
-Mother, resident

There is a reason why tourists don't pay much money here. You don't see all these handicraft and art things. Suomenlinna should be more open. Discounts are always good.
-Danish student studying in Helsinki

If you can package it right it would work really well. It reminds me of Princess Island in Turkey where you spend the whole day there and go to the shops and cafes.
-Indian student studying in Helsinki

It's odd that tourists just pay two euro to come to the island. What if they could pay a one euro entrance, how would it affect things? The neighbours help each other a lot here so the timebank idea might work well here. Often my computer has problems and a friend helps me out but this sometimes feels like a proper service that is on the edge of something that one should perhaps pay for. So for those situations the money would work really well. How would a bank or exchange

counter work? Who would take care of it? What if this project could create a new job!
-Resident, mother and publicist whose kid took part in the children's workshop

I am poor, so I can't afford to spend much money anywhere. I think it's a good idea though.
-Helsinki silversmith

When I first came here I didn't know that people lived here. I don't know about the local money, I got so used to the euro. We still have our own money in Hungary. The euro makes things easier. For example, we didn't plan to come here. If we had to think about changing the money it would have been a hassle. It's so easy to pay with a credit card. But changing money on the ferry would be great. Lots of people from Helsinki come to Suomenlinna just because it's nice weather and I wanted a walk.
-Hungarian student studying in Helsinki

22 Oct 2011

Strange rumours

Nathalie In the afternoon Suvi had gone for a walk on the Suomenlinna paths to talk to people and distribute flyers. Less than an hour later, Suvi was back. She looked upset and mumbled something like, "everybody hates the project and is hostile towards me." It turned out that on her tour of the island that she had bumped into Sofia who told her a rumour that we had been rude to Mauno, and forced ourselves into his house. She said that this had created bad feelings towards the project amongst a large number of people.

notes | 22 Oct 2011

Teppo's question

"How many people are more than passively interested in a local currency on Suomenlinna?"

22 Oct 2011

A shocking conversation with the Governing Body

Christian **Nathalie** Suvi had also run into the Governing Body's spokeswoman, not knowing who she was. She had told Suvi quite abruptly that nobody on the island supported this project. Christian proposed to go and look for the Governing Body's spokeswoman and talk to her. Eventually we found her at the Suomenlinna museum and had a long discussion with her. A very interesting and quite shocking discussion where she confronted us with a passive-aggressive attitude towards the project. She talked about the local residents in an extremely condescending way by saying they are "not ready for it" as if they were children or rabbits that are easily led with "free carrots". In the same way she also talked about the tourists like sheep that need to be herded to avoid making them "more dizzy in their heads".

For the Governing Body the island only consists of the sea, the navy base, and a selective history of the island. Things that are taking the attention away from this central focus are perceived as a sort of threat. They see themselves as guardians of the historic island, which results in them imposing such a strict cultural and physical constraint on the island. The spokeswoman went as far as telling us that they had talked to all the shops and that they are unified in their rejection of the project:

"The Suomenlinna society is not taking part in this project at all. If I was you, I would understand that the inhabitants' own representative organ is not supporting this. Of 800 people who live here 250 children are under 16, so they are out.

Old people are weak and don't really understand much. So there are only 200 people that might possibly take part in the project. That is too few."

The spokeswoman was trying to undermine our legitimacy by arguing that we could not possibly set up this project if we did not have enough local support. The argument was that our representational legitimacy in making this a Suomenlinna currency depended on us enrolling enough local people. The feeling was that the Governing Body was treating us like an opposition politician who must be undermined. The spokeswoman even delivered a strange veiled threat when she said that we should have known who they were before we started this project.

While we were sitting in the cafe talking to her we felt shocked by the intensity of this opposition. We really had to

concentrate on trying to stay calm, whilst taking the notes of the meeting. What a dramatic and shocking day! Should we go ahead with this project in the face of such obvious institutional opposition? Suvi was very shaken by her encounters on this day, even traumatised, and from that day on and her attitude changed. The project became a burden for her and she did not want to go back to the island anymore.

reflection by Christian | 26 Oct 2011
After Väkevä Viapori

We need clarity about what is going on. Has there been a misunderstanding? If not, we could have a confrontational project. Do we have enough allies to proceed? **We need to demonstrate desire** We need to have 25 people signed up.

notes | 22 Oct 2011

Conversation with the spokeswoman of the Suomenlinna Governing Body

These are the notes from the meeting with the spokeswoman from the Suomenlinna Governing Body. The notes were typed verbatim by Christian while the interview was taking place. All parties were aware the notes were being taken. Only cosmetic changes were made to the notes to clarify the foreign use of English.

Spokeswoman: I personally love this and it can work well but it needs to be modelled to this particular place.

Christian: It was designed specifically for Suomenlinna to emphasise the living heritage of the island.

Spokeswoman: The atmosphere is at such a point that people are tired of projects. The city of Helsinki obliged all the shops to take part in an evaluation program that forced them to evaluate themselves on how to increase their quality. The shopkeepers are too tired to start a new project.

Christian: But when we have been talking with people we have had huge numbers of enthusiastic people and lots of shopkeepers that are enthusiastic.

Spokeswoman: Who are these shopkeepers? I don't believe this. Jussi doesn't like the project. Some might be enthusiastic, but they are not ready! Timing is crucial here. Next summer maybe ... The role of the Governing Body is to take care of coordinating the services that are for tourists. We can't oblige people to take part in the project.

Christian: We don't need any money or time from you. Just some support in terms of contacting the people on the island. Could we have addresses of the shopkeepers so that we could send them some material?

Spokeswoman: We can't give out their details but you can just look on the public website. We are the legal owners of Suomenlinna renting out all the structures. We look after the former military buildings and do restoration work. We have 100 staff and look after 317 households. We don't promote anything that is not our core work.

Christian: So what about the branding process

that you have been going through?

Spokeswoman: Yes, you are right. This is something we did and it didn't have the results that we would have wanted ... Your project is certainly related ... 'Suomenlinna is a military base' is the main message. The local currency would put attention in the wrong direction. For example the ships over there. These peasant ships are wrong. They take attention away from the military base. [She points at some modern leisure sailing boats in the harbour]. That's why the Governing Body doesn't want to advertise the local currency. We cannot facilitate contact with local people. The physical roads we look after are the only interface that we have with the local people. We are trying to communicate three themes—the sea, the Military navy base, three different historical regimes on the island.

Christian: So would you support this project if we launched it next summer?

Spokeswoman: Oh no, next summer is not right ... The Governing Body is not going to help you now. I love the project personally ... It could be part of the ready made brand of Suomenlinna in the future but for now we are focusing on our core role. It depends on wider political future events, who gets elected, etc. ... You should have made a project specifically for this place!

Christian: But you said the only problem is people's tiredness, not the specifics of the project. You yourself think the project is positive.

(No response)

Christian: So would you oppose this project or make problems for us if we went ahead anyway?

Spokeswoman: We would not oppose this project at all. It could be categorised as social activity on the part of the people here. We are in good cooperation with the Community Association. We are happy if people are active and find cohesion. The Viapori Forum might be excited about the project but they are not ready for it. We have been talking about this money with all the shops. The Governing Body and Ehrensvärd Society work side by side. Together we rent the conference spaces. We are not ready for this! The Suomenlinna society is not taking part in this

project at all. If I was you, I would understand that the inhabitants' own representative organ is not supporting this. Of 800 people who live here 250 children are under 16, so they are out. Old people are weak and don't really understand much. So there are only 200 people that might possibly take part in the project. That is too few.

[Christian explains that for timebanking 300 people is the normal max anyway]

Christian: Can we have a wider public clarification meeting since there seem to be lots of rumours and miscommunication spreading about this project?

Spokeswoman: People are so tired, nobody would come. We as the Governing Body wouldn't want to be there. If there is a project for free carrots, people are so tired that they don't care about free carrots. I can talk on behalf of all the other associations on the island. Everybody knows everybody here and is a member of multiple associations. You should have known who we were before you started this project.

[Christian mentions that we knew about the role of the Governing Body from the start of the project]

Spokeswoman: I know this project is not going to manage here at this moment ... With visitors what we want to avoid is to make them more dizzy in their heads. There are no signs on the island for people to know where to go. It took us eight years to put up a sign so that the tourists know they have to get off the ferry and that they are on the right island. There should be a sign saying: 'Visitor centre 400 meters this way'. Our architects don't want us to put it there. We are responsible for guiding the tourists. We interview visitors. The number one problem is people getting lost. We don't want another thing that makes things dizzier like a local currency. People don't understand: 'Is there an entrance fee for Suomenlinna?' They can't find the information anywhere.

Christian: So what about Suomenlinna as a living heritage?

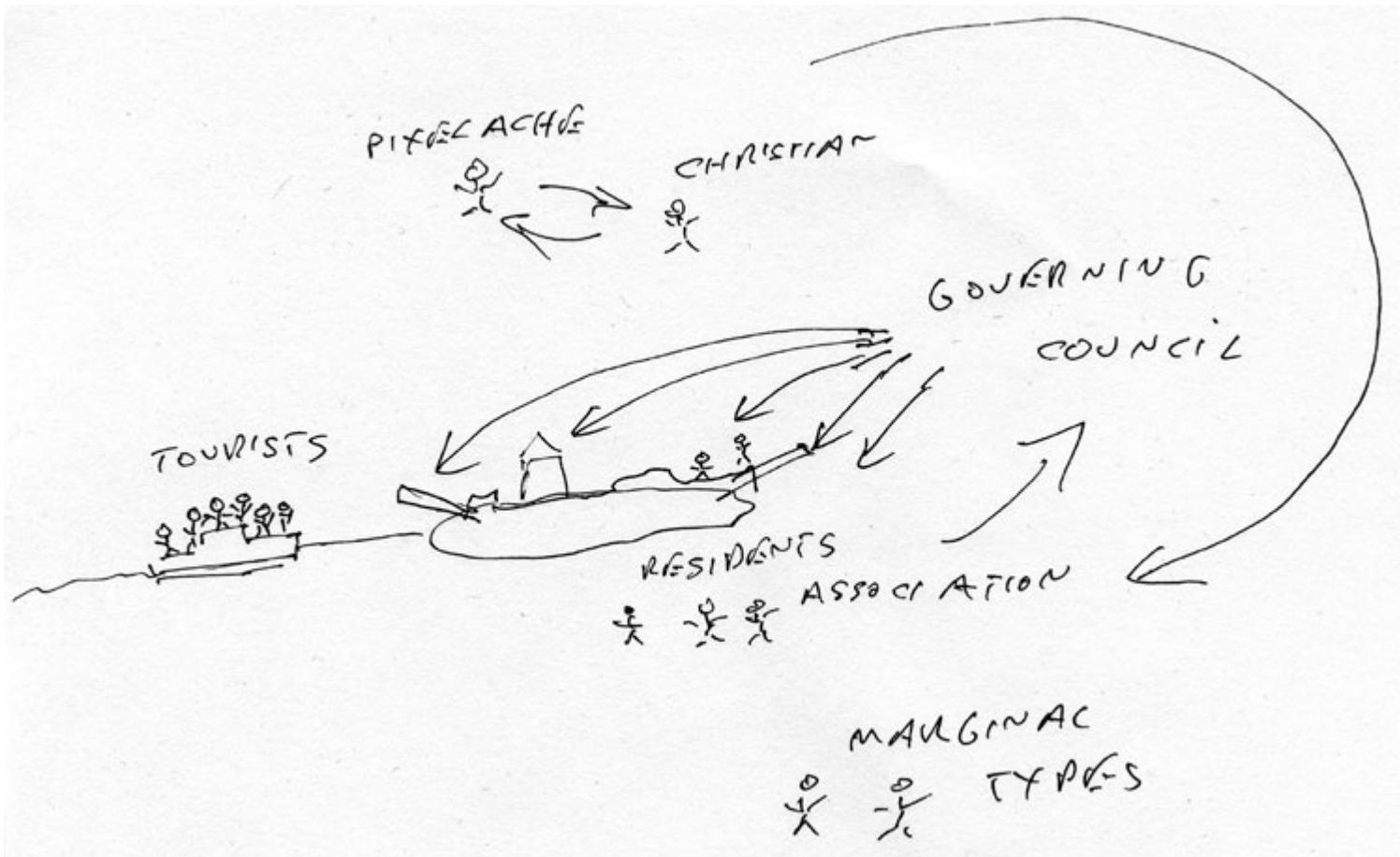
Spokeswoman: Yes, local people should be the ambassadors for the history of Suomenlinna.

Finally an ally in the Community Association

Nathalie The chairman of the Community Association was positive towards us when we were introduced at the Väkevä Viapori event. In November, Sivi was in touch with him to organise a meeting with the Community Association before Christmas.

It was a cold and windy winter day when the meeting was held and the island felt very dark. Sivi, Juha and I walked past the church and up to the tiny Community Association office in one of the wings of a big red residential building. Three people from the association showed up: the chairman, the coordinator of tourist guides for the Ehrensvärd Society and another woman. The atmosphere inside the office was very relaxed. One of the first questions they asked was "How do you imagine the currency to work in practice?" We had prepared for this question, so we showed them our model. They made very interesting comments, for instance saying

that using the example of the Bijlmer Euro map would be very useful when we go and meet businesses and that part of the income should be reinvested in reprinting maps and flyers. They suggested we should highlight the fact that this project will help Suomenlinna benefit from the tourist flow, instead of just having the negative effects of it. They proposed that we could use their communication channels of the mailing list and local paper. They also suggested the association could direct the currency profits to different local projects. They came up with the specific proposal that the profits should be used to pay the salary of an instructor for the youth centre, which currently has difficulties functioning without resources. We thought this was brilliant and it made things much more concrete for us. This meeting was very decisive for us in deciding to continue the project. We felt that the Community Association was an ally!



The difficulties of getting the businesses on board

Nathalie After the Christmas break, high on the energy from the meeting with the Community Association, we tried to find out if anyone was prepared to join the project, such as businesses or boat companies. We might have overestimated the impact of the support from the Community Association in light of the fact that they were the first decisive ally we had on our side. If that meeting had not turned out well, the project may well have ended in December 2011. Yet because it was positive, we felt we should take the project to the next stage, and map out all the participating businesses, freelancers and artists. Our strategy was to first contact the people and organisations we imagined would be the most positive.



Glass studio Hytti

We proposed a simple idea to the businesses. Once the project partners were confirmed, we would compile a map of the island with the locations of all the partners, information about their discounted products and the general project. This map would be distributed in the Helsinki Market Square where tourists board the ferry to Suomenlinna. During the ferry ride, people would have time to get familiar with the project. Upon setting foot on the island, they would visit the money exchange point to change their euros for local currency. In this way the participants would receive good visibility and visitors would learn about services and special offers that might otherwise remain unnoticed.

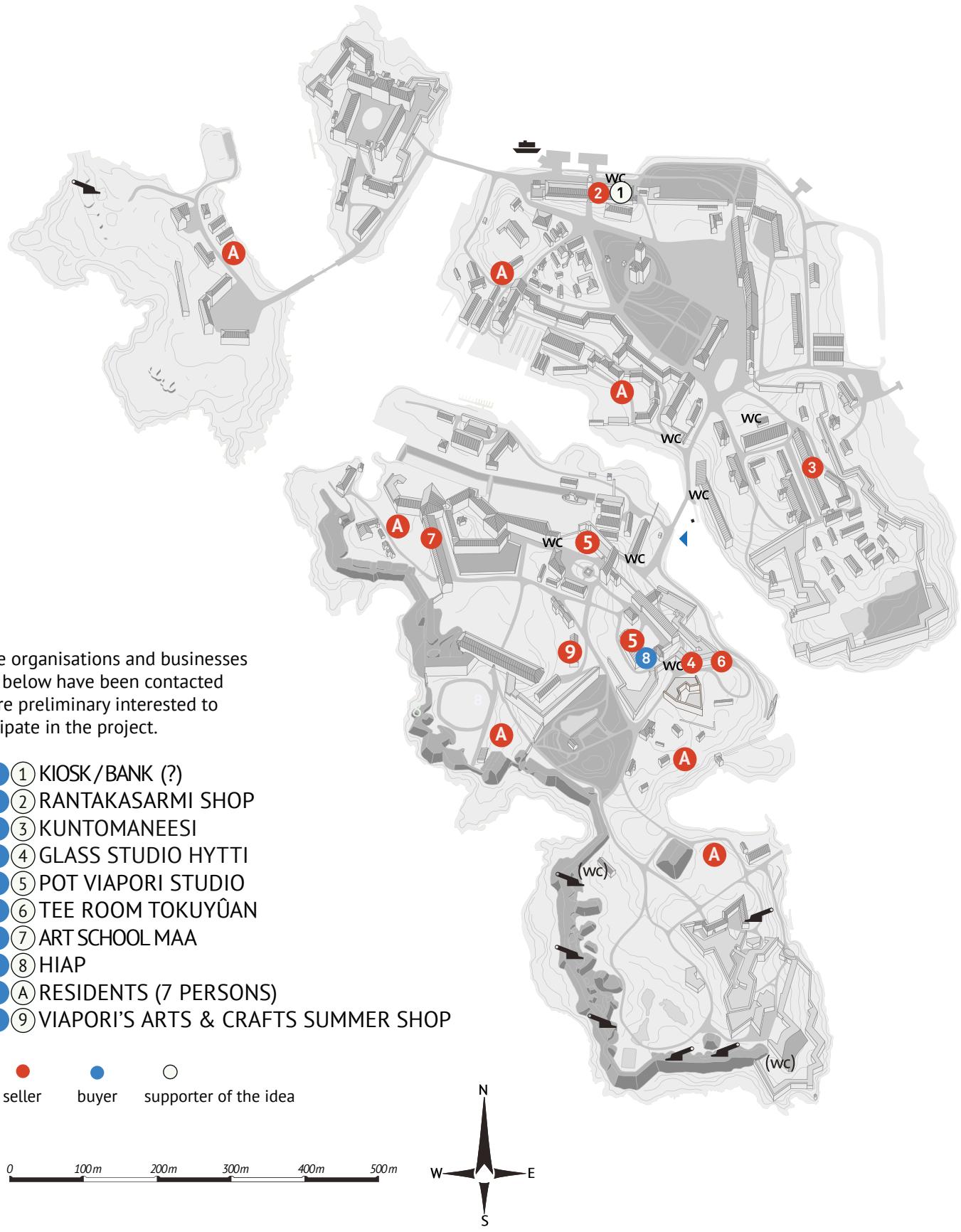
After contacting people with this proposal by email, we also tried to organise personal appointments. Between January and March 2012 we had meetings with a dozen small businesses and restaurants. We had an interesting meeting with the owner of the kiosk at the harbour, which would have made a perfect currency exchange point. Mikko is also a bookkeeper and has a great sense of humour. He was very open to discussing the currency idea. The activity of his kiosk is clearly structured around the two main seasons, with only

one employee during the winter and six to seven during the spring and summer season. Mikko's first question was about the security features of the banknote. If the kiosk was the bank and exchange point, what would happen if there was some mistake in the bookkeeping? Who would pay if mistakes were made? Who would be responsible? Clearly Mikko was afraid that the responsibility and time spent might be too extensive and the compensation too small in comparison. We did not really speak of any other compensation than providing them with more visibility and receiving more clients. Moreover he was clear that they would not have the time to go through the transactions every day and check the balance. Another issue was that since they have so many staff members in summer, they would have to teach each of them how to deal with the local currency. This meeting was very fruitful, since Mikko raised some useful practical questions that we would have to tackle before we could set this up as a functioning money system.



SUOMENLINNA MONEY LAB

Map of potential partners



How will the currency work and how will it look?

This chapter contains texts and diagrams that describe the detailed functioning of the proposed currency. These were iterative and on-going sketches that were not fully formalised since the project was abandoned before becoming a functioning currency. The chapter covers the graphic design competition we set up for the Kuula banknote, as well as a money design workshop with school children from Suomenlinna. Since this chapter focuses tightly on the alternative money system and the banknote design, it is not strictly chronological but thematically organised.

The way the system will work

The currency system is designed to create relationships between two different groups, so there are two different cycles: an external one for tourists and other visitors and an internal one for local inhabitants. Diagrams on the following pages show how these two cycles are interconnected.

Visitors who take the ferry to the island see a poster promoting the currency in the waiting room at Helsinki harbour. There they can also pick up an information booklet that tells them about the project and provides them with a map of the island that lists the locations of all the shops that have agreed to participate in the project.

A small stall on the ferry functions as a bank at which the visitors can exchange their euros for the local currency on a one-to-one basis, so one euro equals one Kuula. By the time the visitors arrive on the island they will have had time to look at the map of the shops where they can spend the local money, and they will have the local currency in their pocket. The benefit for the businesses is that the project guides visitors to unique local shops that otherwise are not easy to find. In particular the local craft shops and unusual businesses such as Ceramic Studio Pot Viapori benefit from more visibility through the local currency system. These local businesses

get many more visitors and sales increase.

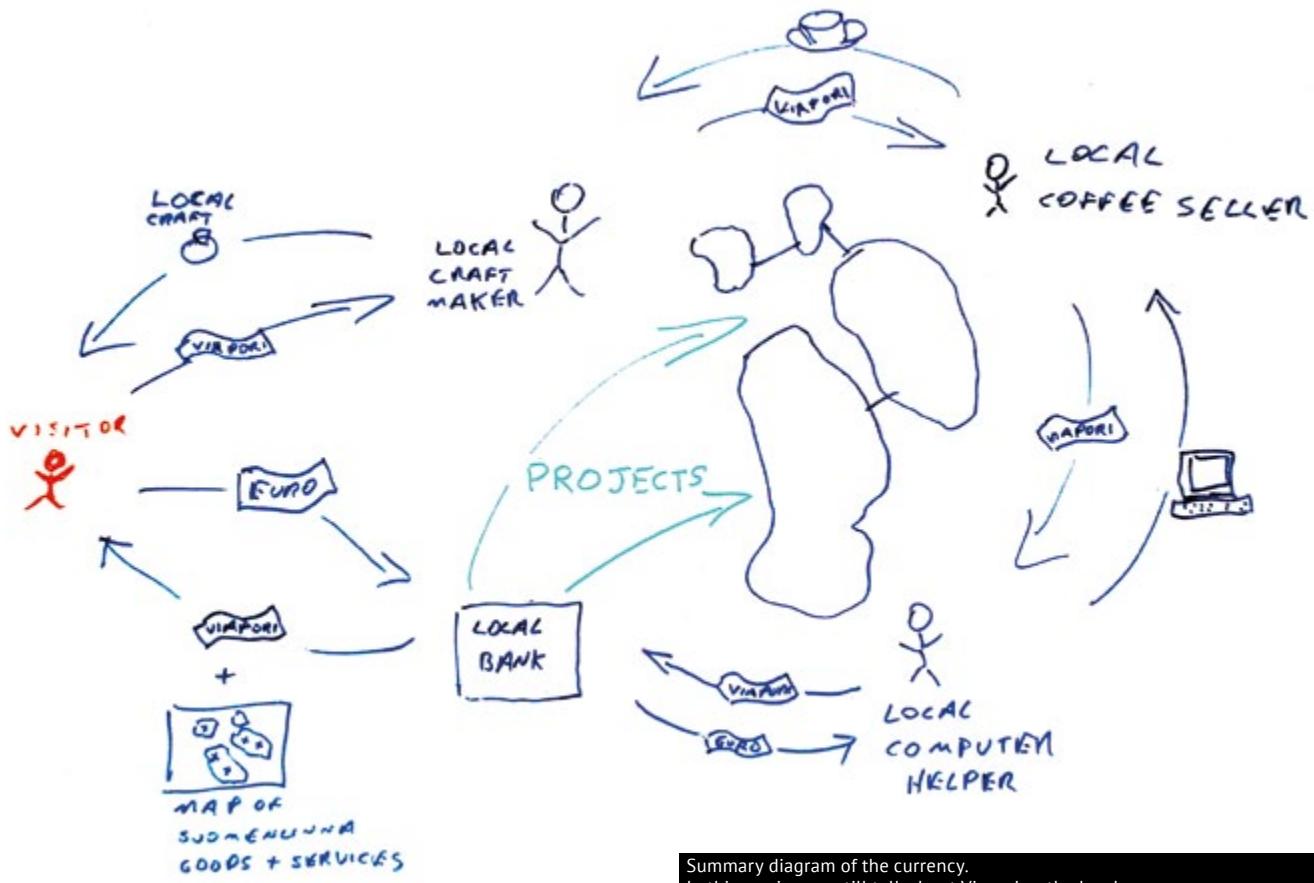
Visitors benefit from special discounts or gifts that they get when they visit one of the local craft shops and pay with the local currency. These discounts vary depending on the shop and are all listed on the map, as well as on the project website. Any local money that the visitors don't spend on the island can either be exchanged back or taken home as a souvenir. In this way any money that visitors take home stays as profit in the local bank. We think that a significant amount of people would use the local banknote as a souvenir, since the monetary value of the note is actually low, whilst the symbolic value of the unique artwork that they keep is very high. Based on the official figure of 650,000 visitors arriving on the island every year, we estimate that on average every tenth tourist would try the local money and take one euro worth of local currency back home with them as a souvenir. This would mean the project would generate a profit of at least €65,000, which could be used to support local social and cultural projects.

The bank is a non-profit entity owned and administered by the local residents. The decisions about how to invest the profits is made by a committee facilitated by the Community Association. The initial idea suggested by the

Community Association was that the profits should be used to pay a teacher to give lessons at a youth project on the island.

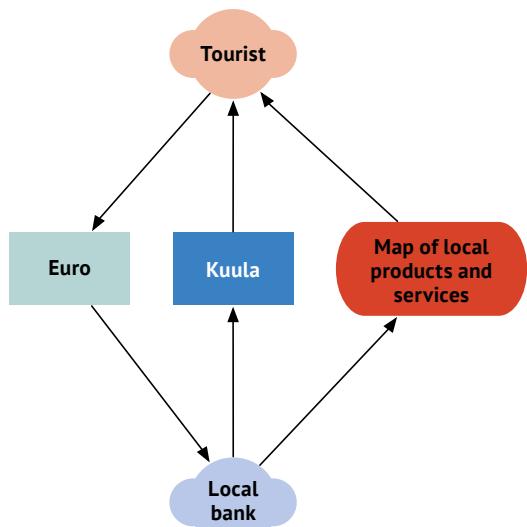
The second part of the Kuula economy is an internal one for the local inhabitants. Local craftspeople who have received Kuula for their products can spend the money in the same way as a visitor, for example at a local coffee shop. In turn the coffee shop owner can use the Kuula to pay for some local computer help. In this way the money stays in a closed internal loop, but it can also be exchanged back to euros at the local bank at Suomenlinna harbour.

The benefit of this internal cycle is to initiate and support small local initiatives such as computer help, yoga or other services that do not flourish without the local currency. The external cycle stimulates the internal one, that in turn stimulates the local social and economic network and could be the first step towards a Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) scheme that is entirely disconnected from money exchanges.

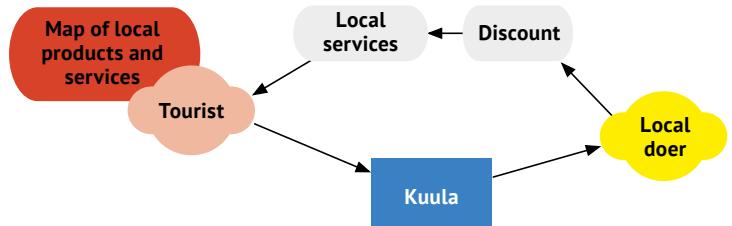
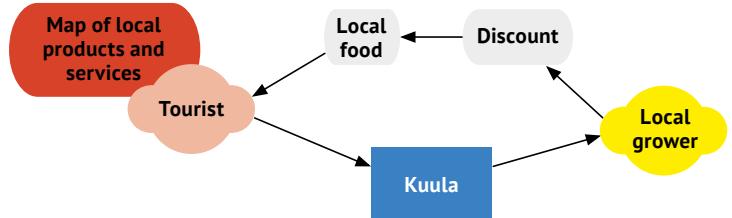


Summary diagram of the currency.
In this version we still talk about Viapori as the local currency.

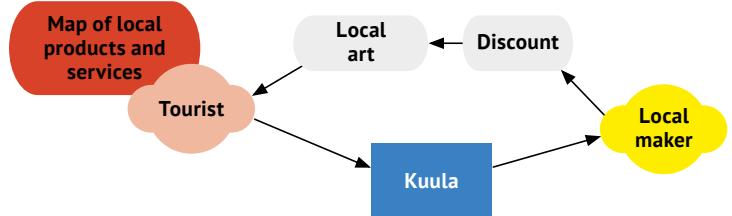
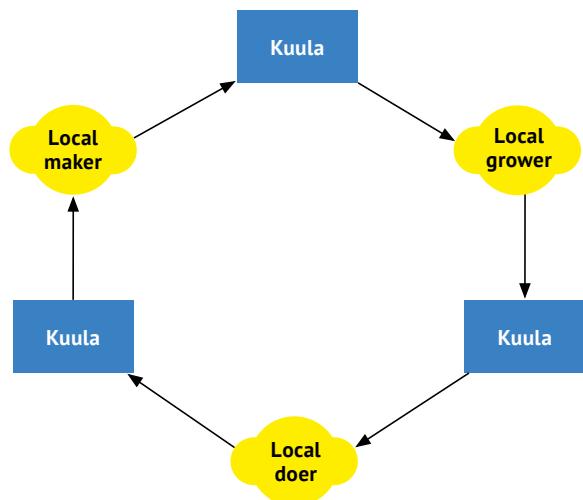
On the ferry tourists exchange euros for the local currency and get a map of local products services from the local bank.



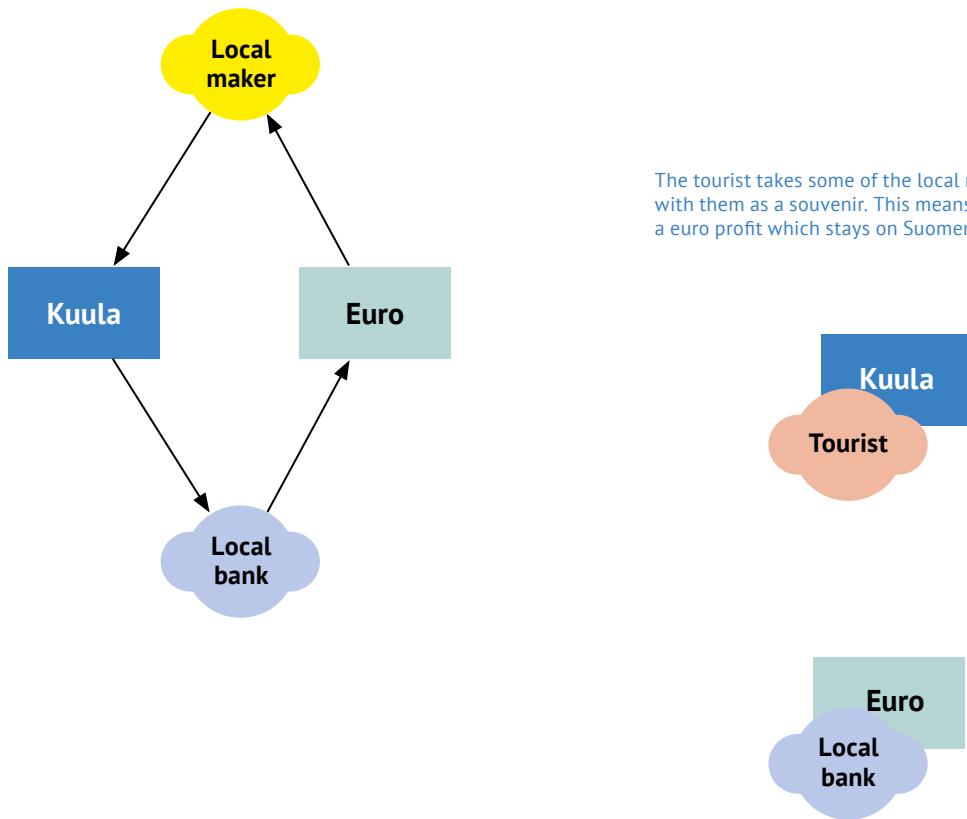
Guided by the map, the tourists use the local money to buy local food, services and art and get a small discount because they are using the local money rather than euros.



The local maker buys local food from the local grower with local money thus establishing a local network of exchange.

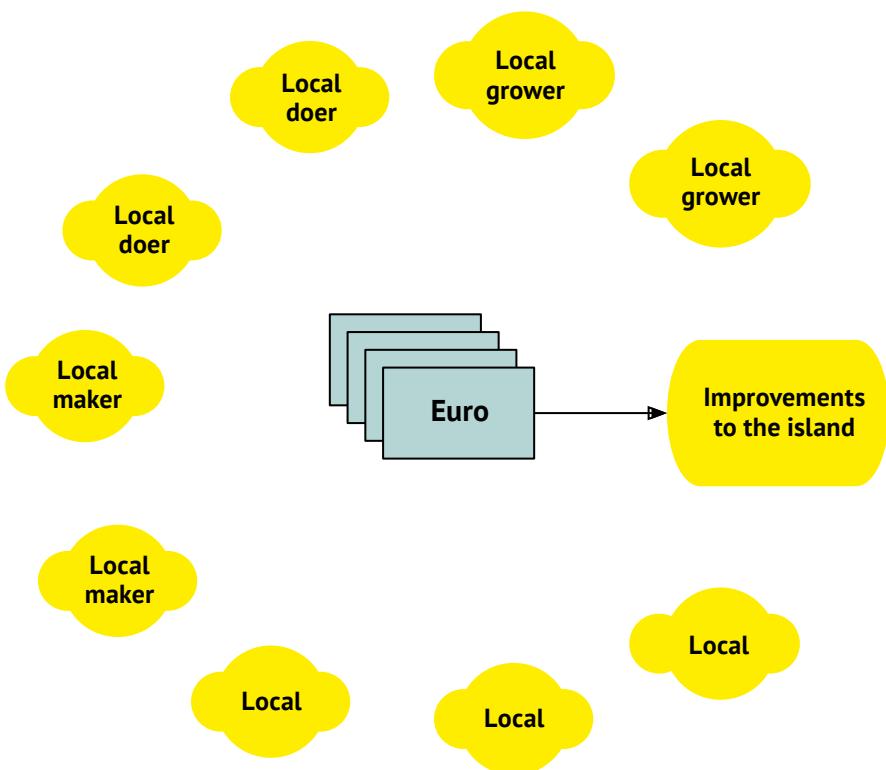


Since the local network cannot provide for all the needs, the local maker exchanges some of the local money into euros at the local bank.



The tourist takes some of the local money home with them as a souvenir. This means there is a euro profit which stays on Suomenlinna.

A collective of local people meets to decide how to spend the generated euro profits to improve life on the island.



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Christian Nold is a British artist and researcher developing complimentary currency systems and is currently in the process of creating a local currency called the Kuula for the Finnish island of Suomenlinna. Read more about the project on www.viapori.net

The secret life of money

What does our money say about us? Christian Nold takes a look at the design history of the Finnish national currency along with an interview with designer Erik Bruun, who shows us what a 'green' euro might have looked like.

MONEY IS ALMOST INVISIBLE. We only notice it when we don't have it. We use banknotes nearly every day but most people wouldn't remember the person or image on a twenty-euro note. Yet the global banking crisis has really focused people's attention on the mechanics of how the economy functions, and exposed a whole variety of organisations with odd names like Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch and Standard & Poor's that seem to be running our world. People are starting to realise that the value of the money in their pocket is directly linked to the behaviour of these obscure organisations.

SO WHAT is money? It's a medium of exchange that enables relationships between people. At the same time banknotes are beautifully crafted artworks that reveal much about our society. How do form and function combine in a banknote? Let's take a look at the stories that banknotes tell about us.

THE FIRST ever Finnish banknote, the one-markka, emerged in 1860 and looked more like a personal certificate of achievement. Printed on coloured paper and surrounded by an oval neo-ro-coco decorative border, its cursive text imitates hand writing and promises to pay the bearer in silver. The signature of the Bank Director makes the note look like a personal letter.

LATER Finnish money gains colour, mainly pale pastels, and starts to feature heraldic symbols and classical goddesses. The value of the note takes centre stage. In 1877, an unusual note appears that instead of the value in the centre, shows a small "window" on the world with a realistic etching of an idyllic Finnish countryside. A river flows into the distance, surrounded by a dense forest of pines. The im-

pression on this 500-markka note is that this is the kind of view you can afford with this high value bank note.

THESE pictorial windows continue on the 1909 notes, but this series is far more down to earth, focusing on a tree, a waterfall and a dairy farm with two cows facing each other. Looking more closely at the waterfall, you can see that it is surrounded by paddle-wheels for generating electricity. From a modern perspective, it seems incredibly humble that a currency would celebrate both hydroelectric power and cows.

IN 1922, the design of the money takes a different, neo-classical direction in a series designed by **Eliel Saarinen**. The notes feature groups of classically naked men, women and children holding farming implements, or assembled

the banknotes designed by Professor **Erik Bruun**. The notes feature vibrant colours and sharp details, showing iconic modernist buildings as well as nature in the form of birds in mid-flight over forests that blend into spectral abstraction. Talking to the 85-year-old Bruun at his home and studio on the island of Suomenlinna, I put it to him that these notes look amazingly contemporary. He smiles and waves away the compliment but is obviously pleased. The huge body of design work he has accumulated for more than 60 years is currently experiencing a major resurgence. Walking around Helsinki today, one still sees prints of his iconic orange soft drink advertising from the 1950's.

BRUUN was already a famous designer when the Finnish government asked him to be

Banknotes are beautifully crafted artworks that reveal much about our society. How do form and function combine in a banknote?

around an anvil holding sledge hammers whilst smoke belches out of factory buildings and ship funnels in the background. Saarinen's aim was to represent the different occupations and classes of Finnish society working together in socialist harmony. On the back of these banknotes, nature is represented as a series of enormous magical trees covered in stars, which look like illustrations from the Lord of the Rings. Bringing together industrial labour and nature was intended to reflect progress and a belief in a bright future for everyone. Perhaps it is this idealism which perfectly captures the hope that money would be able to mediate between people, modernity and nature.

IN 1986, the Finnish currency changed dramatically with

part of a group that would design the new money. Initially, his involvement had to be kept secret, since releasing new bank notes was usually a sign of governmental problems and only done to combat severe inflation. In the case of the 1986 notes, the aim was to introduce a whole new range of security features to the banknotes as well as a fundamental visual redesign. By asking a famous commercial designer of popular brands to redesign the money, the government was branding the Finnish currency with a strong visual identity. While Bruun could not directly transfer the pop aesthetic to money, he managed to apply a dramatic colour fade across the banknotes for visual impact, as well as a security feature that made it

harder to copy the watermark. For the first time, the banknotes featured portraits of popular cultural figures, such as the designer **Alvar Aalto** and runner **Paavo Nurmi**, rather than idealised figures.

BRUUN managed to combine graphical hipness with shaping a specific focus on Finland as a unique place. Gazing across the sea from his window, I can easily see where his inspiration comes from. Suomenlinna is a Unesco heritage site, and the world's largest maritime fortress. Nearly every square centimetre of Bruun's studio is covered with sketches of local animals and collections of natural objects which are featured on the banknotes. The 1000-markka note features the King's Gate, which is a short walk from Bruun's house and the symbol of Suomenlinna. Bruun had only to look upon his surroundings in order to combine Finnish history with nature and represent it on the bank notes.

IN 1996, Bruun was commissioned by the Finnish Bank to create a proposal for the future euro. After a year of work, he came up with a revolutionary series of banknote designs. Holding the drawings in my hand, I am shocked by the vividness of the colours. I hadn't known that money could be so colourful. I notice that there are no portraits of people, only delicate drawings of birds, butterflies, pine cones, and wheat and berries.

BRUUN imagined that holding these banknotes would change people's daily relationship with natural things. He imagined that the five-euro note might colloquially become known as the "nightingale", and the ten-euro as the "butterfly" after their illustrations. On the reverse of each is a closeup detail of

the creature. On the "nightingale", the detail is feathers; on other notes, you see intricate fish scales and leaf veins, as if to suggest that you are touching nature by handling the money. Rather than creating abstract representations of European identity, these designs offer a radical and tactile vision of the living world morphed into a banknote.

EVEN more extraordinary is that two of the notes represent wind turbines and solar cells, which have today become the iconic symbols of our present and future. "Solar energy and wind power were already topical in 1996. And I have always had great faith in them," says Bruun. In his proposal for the euro, he offers a persuasive vision of money that represents nature as a living entity as well as an abundant and inexhaustible energy resource. It seems surprising that Bruun's designs were not chosen for the euro. When I asked him if he is disappointed, he diplomatically answers that he thinks he would have a better chance if the competition were to be held again today.

IT IS A VERY odd feeling paging through the catalogue of the euro design competition produced by the European Central Bank. While some of the designs look similar to the present euro, others depict a Europe from a parallel universe. Many designs show historical cartoon drawings of medieval faces, grinning like Robin Hood actors from EuroDisney. Others show multi-cultural children's faces staring mawkishly at us.



- 29 February 2012 was the deadline for exchanging Finnish markka, ten years after the changeover to the euro. It has been estimated that over 1 billion markka remains unclaimed.
- There is an illustration competition for the design of the Kuula banknote. The deadline to enter designs is 9 March. More info at www.pixplache.ac/helsinki/kuvituskilpailu/

like advertisements for a charity. Yet others look like 1990s computer interfaces with drop-down menus. Finally you reach the design by **Robert Kalina** which won the competition. It features buildings with wide-open windows, gates and entrances. In fact, the buildings represent historical architectural styles rather than depicting any specific building, so as not to offend any of the EU member countries.

THE PRESIDENT of the European Central Bank has said that "banknotes are not only a means of payment, they are also pieces of craftsmanship reflecting the soul of the nations issuing them." Well, the main visual metaphor of the euro is openness and transparency, showing open gates and entrances that are meant to remind us of democratic ideals. Defining openness and transparency as one's soul seems rather vague and even disingenuous when the Euro is traded via so-called dark pools of liquidity, which allow trades to happen away from public gaze.

IF THE EURO survives the current turmoil, there are sure to be dramatic changes. With so many of us distrustful of the whole financial system, perhaps it is time to create new forms of money that place it on a more solid footing with the natural world. Erik Bruun believes that by designing new bank notes, we could refocus people on what is important and bring back a respect for nature as a living world as well as an abundant resource.

21 Oct 2011

School money design workshop with children

Christian In September 2011 we had met Riitta, who is a teacher at the elementary school on Suomenlinna. From that meeting the idea of setting up a 'money design workshop' at her school in October emerged. On the day of the workshop, I had to get up incredibly early to get to the school in time for the lessons to start. It was still before sunrise but the walk to the school was lovely and showed me the island at a magical time without any people or noise. When I arrived at the school, Riitta was especially welcoming and kind and the children were incredibly calm and articulate. From their classroom, which was close to the beach, they had a gorgeous view across the whole Helsinki Bay. Certainly the most impressive school I had ever been to.

Riitta had prepared for the workshop by getting hold of fake play-money of all the euro denominations, which we distributed amongst the children and asked them to look at very carefully. We asked them to close their eyes and think about what they remembered from the banknotes. The children's English was very good and they talked about the patterns and buildings they had seen. We asked them to draw what they remembered, on different coloured paper for each of the euro denominations. The drawings share some very interesting similarities such as security patterns, denomination numbers and circles of stars, which highlight the security and technical elements of the euro banknote. The buildings on the euro notes, which are supposed to be iconic and represent Europe, seem marginal and appear as abstract lines in their drawings.

For the next activity we asked the children to make their own Suomenlinna money and to draw what they would like to see on the money of their own island. They were asked to represent something of their own life and what is important to them. The drawings are amazingly diverse, and much more visual than the euro drawings. Some are personal, such as one that features the child's own house, while others identify the iconic lighthouse, the tunnel to the mainland or local wildlife. Another banknote features an impressionistic view of the sea from the classroom window. Another describes a fantastical story of local coins being minted on an island with a volcano and brought by train to Suomenlinna.

I was overwhelmed by the incredible visions of the children and their easy engagement with projecting their lives onto a local banknote. As I left, Riitta suggested that the children might work up their drawings into a series of paintings that developed their concepts further. The resulting paintings are beautiful and impressionistic, with colour adding an additional emotional layer to their visions of a Suomenlinna currency.



8 Feb 2012

The name of the currency is publicly announced

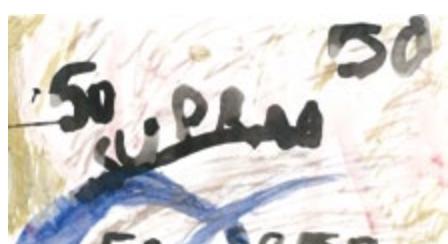
Nathalie In January 2012 we created an online Doodle poll for people to vote on a name for the local currency. In the poll residents and others could vote for name suggestions collected during Väkevä Viapori as well as make new suggestions. There were 20 names up for the vote. We had 39 people voting. Ten people voted for the name Kuula (cannonball). Six people voted for Suomenlinnan Markka, four people voted for Viapori and Taaleri. Suokki and Smarkka & Spenni got three votes each. Fewer votes went to Viaporina, Borg, Linnamarkka, Suomenlinnan Kruunu, Vinspor and Suomoney. The participation to the poll was quite satisfying. After all, 39 votes was significant. If 39 people felt they wanted to give a name to the currency, that was an encouraging signal. The official name of the Suomenlinna local currency was announced at the same time as the illustration competition for the banknote in February 2012.

1 Mar 2012

Learning about the history of Finnish money

Christian I discovered that the Bank of Finland museum is located close to Helsinki harbour and has a permanent exhibition that visually represents the story of the Finnish currency www.rahamuseo.fi/en. I loved the many small snippets of information in the exhibition such as the fact that the first form of Finnish currency was squirrel skins that were traded. In fact this is why the Finnish word for money—*raha*—also originally means squirrel skin. There were some amazing stories in the museum that fuse the social and economic history of Finland with the material of metal coins and fabric banknotes. There was a time when banknotes were physically cut in half to reduce their value to deal with inflation. The exhibition gives prominent attention to the last national Finnish banknotes designed by Mauno, which were well loved. After that everything changed to the euro. During my visit I bought two books, one about the history of the Finnish money and another on the euro design competition, which shows all the alternative euro designs that didn't win. Based on these books I wrote an article for the Helsinki Times that tells a visual history of the Finnish currency that treats the representation qualities of money as a serious topic and not just as symbolic exchange (see page 50).

Suomenlinna currency designs by children from Suomenlinna elementary school, grades 2 and 4



announcement | 9 Feb 2012

Illustration competition

Illustration competition: banknote for local currency in Suomenlinna

Prize: 1500 euros

Deadline: 9th March 2012

Organiser: Pixelache Helsinki (Piknik Frequency ry)

As part of Suomenlinna Money Lab project we are looking for an illustrator to create a visual thematic for a new local currency called the Kuula (cannonball) for the Finnish island of Suomenlinna.

Aim & objective

The island is a unique maritime fortress, designated as a World Heritage site with a fascinating and multi-layered history. Every year it receives 650,000 tourists who come to visit the island via a small ferry from Helsinki. It is also

a 'living' island with 800 local residents as well as a naval academy and an open prison.

We are looking for three banknote designs for the one (1), three (3) and nine (9) Kuula banknotes. These banknotes will not be legal tender but rather a complementary local currency that will only be used on this island. We will require a front and back design for each of the banknotes. We imagine that the front of the banknotes will carry a unique illustration, while the back will be standard and carry a numerical representation as well as some explanatory text. There might also be a need for QR code as well as some special security features on the standard side. The physical size and format of the notes should be similar to a normal banknote, to fit into wallets and cash registers.

The visual theme of the banknote should aim to capture the identity of the island as 'Living Heritage', which represents the life of people on the island, shaped by the physical and social environment as well as its history. We are looking for a contemporary re-imagining of this living heritage captured in an illustration. The audience for the banknote will be both tourists coming to the island expecting to see the history of the island, as well as the local people who are very familiar with the iconography of the place. The design should try to capture something of both these different understandings of the island. For inspiration we recommend looking at the official Suomenlinna website www.suomenlinna.fi as well as the Community Association website www.viaporinliitto.fi. For money designs we recommend looking at the euro designs created by Erik Bruun.

15 Mar 2012

The Bank of Finland raises issues

Nathalie Unexpectedly, our communications in spring aroused the attention of the Bank of Finland www.suomenpankki.fi/en. One of the senior lawyers got in touch with us, which impressed me. A colleague of his had spotted a small article in Suomen Kuvallehti about the Suomenlinna Money Lab. He called us several times in an insistent but also friendly manner at late evening hours, and later on emailed us. The Bank of Finland wanted to make sure we were aware of the legal issues around the creation of a local currency. The lawyer wanted to bring two aspects to our attention: the security of consumers as well as general legal considerations regarding the issuing of currencies. The bank said that in terms of the Consumer Protection Act, the most important elements to clarify are: the period of validity of the Kuula, the redemption time, how the Kuula banknotes are stored and the actual purchase price of the Kuula compared to the purchase of a good or service at the full price. Our marketing of the Kuula would need to be as clear as possible, taking into account language issues of tourists from different nationalities. The Consumer Ombudsman's Office of Special Experts would be able to advise us further on these matters. The Kuula banknotes should be as visually distinct from the euro as possible, so as to not confuse the users. Whether the Kuula is an illegal imitation of the national currency or not can only be assessed by the relevant authorities once the Kuula is in actual use.

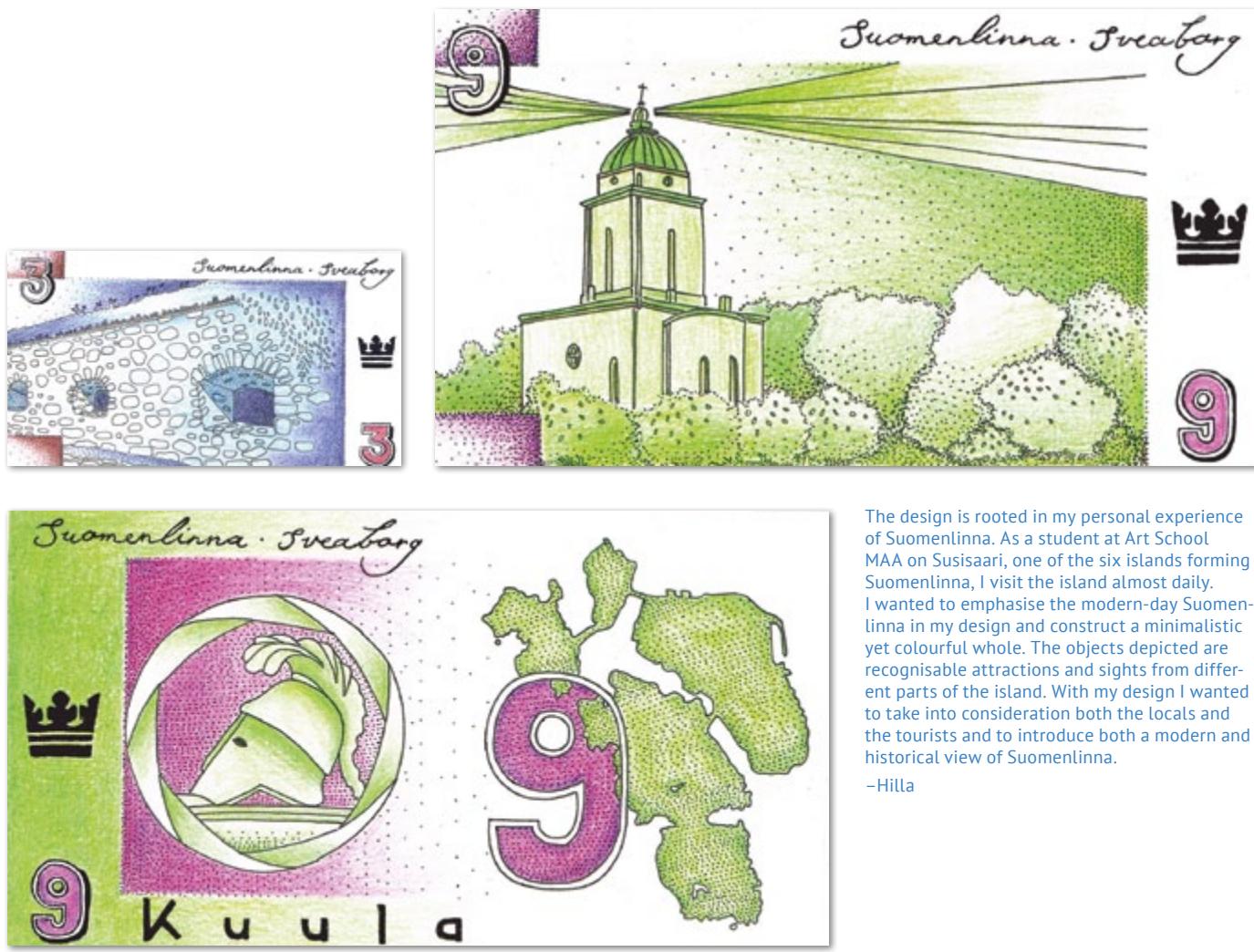


17 Mar 2012

The money design jury meets to pick the winner

Christian We had invited a number of local residents, artists and people from the arts centre to be on the jury that would pick the design for the local currency. We met at the Community Association office and looked carefully through all the entries. We were pleasantly surprised by the diversity of designs. Some obviously came from professional illustrators and looked incredibly polished but somewhat generic, while others were crude but seemed to capture a deep sense of the island. Only one of the entries engaged with the island as a network, while many entries made heavy use of photo-shop filters. These filters were intended to give the artwork a painterly or hand drawn effect but actually added an odd artificial sense to the designs. Many designs focused on the history of the island but presented it rather directly. The designs I personally found the most interesting were the ones that identified physical elements of the island, which

were unique, such as the ferry to the mainland or the washing lines hung from the fortress walls or showed the prison cells with metal bars. Somehow we had to choose between them. We focused on our stated brief, which was for a contemporary re-imagining of living heritage. In the end the jury felt the need to balance an interest in an alternative representation of the island with finding a suitable symbol that would represent the island to tourists as well as local people. My personal favourite entry was voted down in the consensus decision making but we picked a great design that captured the unique church/lighthouse of Suomenlinna (see winning design below). The design also had a charming hand drawn quality that gave it the sense of a personal, living interpretation of the island.



The design is rooted in my personal experience of Suomenlinna. As a student at Art School MAA on Susisaari, one of the six islands forming Suomenlinna, I visit the island almost daily. I wanted to emphasise the modern-day Suomenlinna in my design and construct a minimalist yet colourful whole. The objects depicted are recognisable attractions and sights from different parts of the island. With my design I wanted to take into consideration both the locals and the tourists and to introduce both a modern and historical view of Suomenlinna.

-Hilla

Other designs submitted to the competition accompanied by excerpts from their descriptions



Each Kuula banknote front features animals that are an essential part of nature on Suomenlinna. The nine Kuula note shows a mute swan, the three Kuula note a sea trout and the one Kuula note, a toad. The history of Suomenlinna is the theme of the banknote backs, which have a picture of the Suomenlinna fortress' designer, Augustin Ehrensvärd, with a view of Kustaanmiekka behind him. The banknote colours are lilac (nine Kuula), turquoise (six Kuula) and blue (one Kuula). It is the same size as a €20 note. The design allows for security features to be added.

-Ari



I have always been interested in Suomenlinna because of the colourful history of the island and the unique, communal way of living. The sea is a big part of Suomenlinna's charm. Aside from the tunnel connection, the sea provides the only point of access to and departure from the island. This inspired the idea of arrival as a theme. My design depicts boat 'bows' arriving, and in one note, the front of a bike—a familiar sight on the island since bikes are a popular form of transport. I also wanted to combine the present and the past by evoking the feeling of an old navigational chart and combining it with satellite photographs. The ornamentation on the banknotes is taken from the wrought iron fence around the Suomenlinna church.

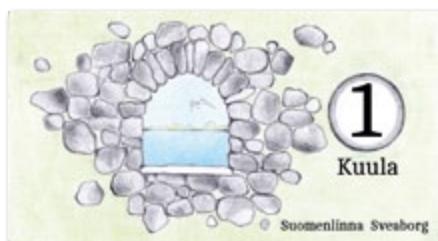
-Jaakko



In my designs I wanted to illustrate Suomenlinna's special location surrounded by water. Experiences of what it means to travel to Suomenlinna and how it feels to experience the connection to the surrounding water from the island. I also wanted to show the beautiful rocks on the island.

The one and three Kuula banknotes bring these ideas strongly forward—water, rocks, travelling to the island, the horizon line. On the nine Kuula note I wanted to present a building that is important for various reasons: the church of Suomenlinna. Another important element of the nine Kuula note is the lilac trees. While the banknote backs are reserved for textual information, they still have the same colour accents and currency symbol.

—Karoliina



On the back of the banknotes is an image of a stone wall with a hole and the view through its opening out to the sea. This image somehow summarises my visual recollection of Suomenlinna; a stone wall surrounding history and the sea view. A round object behind the number symbolises a cannon ball, of course. On the face of the one Kuula note is a stylised cannon ship and King's Gate, which is one of the most popular sites on the island. King's Gate and the rampart represent the fortress in general. The cannon ship represents the boats and shipyard of Suomenlinna, as well as a connection between the past and the present.

The Suomenlinna church dominates the three Kuula note. The people sitting in front of the church represent everyday social life on the island including the local inhabitants and the tourists. On the nine Kuula note are different buildings and structures of the island: the curved buildings in the castle's courtyard, the Rantakasarmi barracks and the bridge behind it. Rose-coloured Rantakasarmi is the gateway to Suomenlinna when arriving from the Kauppatori direction. The big courtyard inside the castle is a central place on the island. I previously depicted its curved buildings in some of my other artworks. Nine of the windows have been highlighted with different colours depending on the value of each banknote.

—Katri Tuulia

The banknote designs show my interpretation of the heritage that makes Suomenlinna's baraka (spiritual power) so unique. Aside from the amazing geographical location—the island is a meeting point of air, water and land—Suomenlinna is hybrid work of nature and human hands, the result of this successful cooperation is the reason the place is special and unique. The buildings and the fortifications do not dominate the landscape, but complement it.

The images that I have chosen for the banknotes show the places where this 'blending/coming together' of human workmanship and 'work of nature' become visible: the underground storage rooms, the characteristic arched windows and portals made of natural materials, and the stone wall. This 'air-land-water' meeting point is symbolised by seagulls—birds that can be found in any of these three spheres.

—Małgorzata



One Kuula note: the hat and plumes of a Suomenlinna soldier.

Three Kuula note: the commemorative monument of Augustin Ehrensvärd, the founder of Suomenlinna, and a section of the Suomenlinna shoreline.

Nine Kuula note: a swan and one of its feathers symbolising the beauty of Suomenlinna.

—Mari



There is a different theme for the front of each banknote. In my proposal, the images are related to the fortress, the residential buildings and the natural environment, but pictures related to the art or residents of Suomenlinna could be used instead (I did not have such pictures free of copyright). The backs of the banknotes are all similar, with the exception of denomination and colour, which is the same as the front.

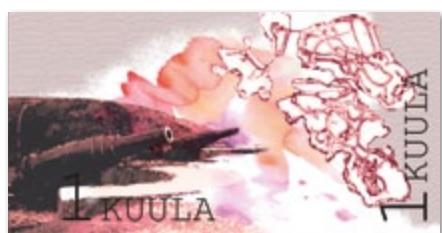
The drawings (the fortress walls and the old map) relate to the history of Suomenlinna. In addition, the shape of each number was inspired by the wall. The white area is reserved for the standard texts normally found on banknotes. For differentiation, each note has its own colour accent and the value shown in the upper corner, depicted with cannonball symbols.

-Mikko



The proposed illustration combines reduced graphics and delicate beauty. The grave of Augustin Ehrensvärd—a site familiar to every visitor of Suomenlinna—the Rantakasarmi barracks, and the local library are depicted on the front sides of the notes, showing the everyday life of Suomenlinna residents. The cannons on the back are related to the currency name. The cannons are especially popular with younger visitors. I chose a pretty and overtly colourful style with bright primary colours in order to ensure the historical references don't detract from the playfulness of the design.

-Mimi-Anna

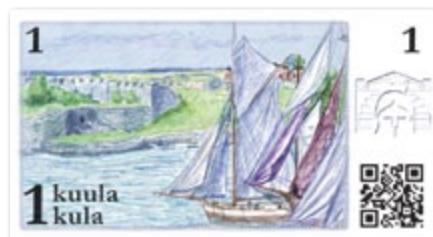


In these banknote designs I have combined all the lovely material and immaterial things that the island of Suomenlinna offers its inhabitants and tourists. For the one Kuula note I chose the rocks of Länsi-Mustasaari. Similar rocks can be found all over the island and for many people they symbolise beautiful summer and winter afternoons, picnics, peace, and relaxation. On the three Kuula note is a picture of an artwork by ceramicist Eeva Jokinen. She works at the ceramic studio Pot Viapori, one of the many artisan studios and galleries on the island.

For the nine Kuula banknote I chose Viapori Jazz as a subject. It is a unique music event in magnificent surroundings. In the background is the arch of the Tenalji von Fersen festival hall.

On each note there is a small map showing a route to these particular places. On the back is the ferry, which many inhabitants use daily and which marks the first step of an adventure for every tourist.

-Mirva



Suomenlinna money should represent the various aspects of the island's history, nature and present day life. In these sketches, all these three themes are included. The visual style is hand-drawn and sketchy, humane and airy.

The theme of the one Kuula banknote is 'life on Suomenlinna' and it shows that people live on the island in all seasons. The ferry is a vital connection to the mainland.

The three Kuula banknote presents the natural environment of Suomenlinna. The plant is woad (*isatis tinctoria*), which was once used as a source of blue pigment and is common on the island. It was cultivated throughout Europe in the past and it grows wild on the coastal areas of South Finland. The nine Kuula note design is inspired by the history of the island. It has a portrait of Augustin Ehrensvärd, a Swedish count, military officer and architect who designed Suomenlinna's master plan and led the construction. There is also an old hand-drawn map of Suomenlinna and a sketch of one part of the fortress.

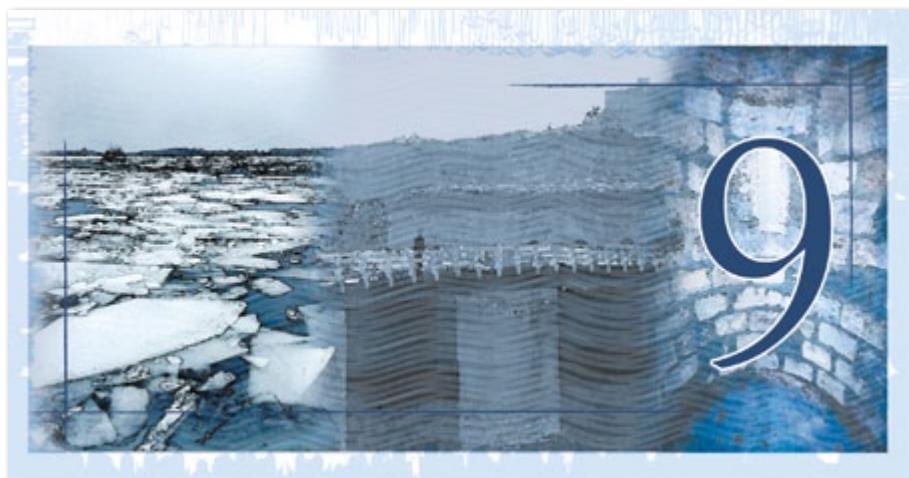
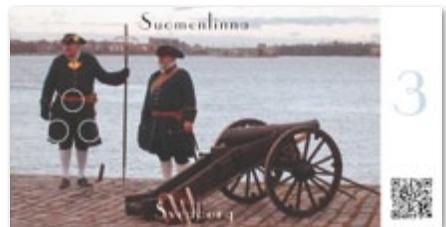
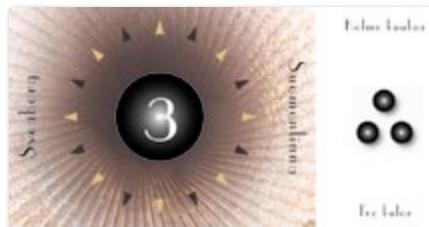
The reverse side is similar on all three notes aside from the denomination. The watermark is the Suomenlinna emblem.

-Outi

The starting points of the design were history, the present day and everyday life. The graphic cannonballs function as visual markers and give three-dimensionality to the banknote. By using letterpress printing, genuine banknotes could be distinguished from potential forgeries.

The images of the lighthouse, the church and the houses (one Kuula) describe everyday life, while the artillerymen represent the contentious history of the island. The arches of the walls make reference to the Suomenlinna's status as a world heritage site, the island's sustainable architecture and the interesting walks for tourists. On the reverse side, the details taken from a cannon barrel form an abstract, graphic surface and add a sense of history to the notes.

-Petteri



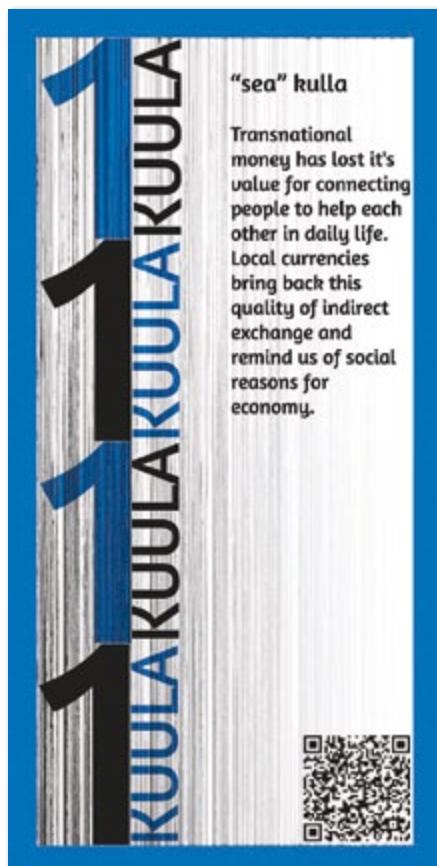
The designs are rooted in the four seasons and the colours they represent. The one Kuula banknote portrays summer, the three Kuula, autumn, and the nine Kuula, winter. Suomenlinna is active all year round, and the idea is to show what the island offers during the different seasons. The backs of the banknotes show Suomenlinna as a whole, while the fronts focus on showing more detailed places on the island. The back has a map and a stylised view of the island from the sea. Summer: the season is all about drying laundry outside in the sea breeze, painting courses in a gorgeous setting and, of course, the rocky beach. Autumn: the banknote radiates Suomenlinna's mystic vibes, the prison, the magnificent autumn colours. The curtains represent the Viapori Jazz Festival and the summer theatre of Suomenlinna. Winter: the icy fortress radiates an impending feeling of war. The bridge represents a connection between tourists and the people living on the island. If you see the ferry from that same bridge, you might still be in time to catch it.

-Saara



The banknote combines the historic setting and culture of Suomenlinna, and also the diverse leisure facilities of the island in a lively, modern, collage-like illustration.

-Tuija



"sea" kulla

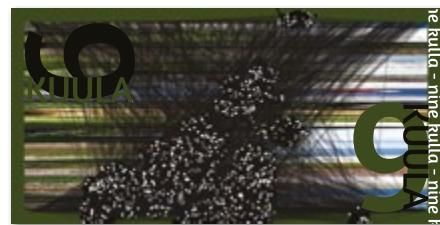
Transnational money has lost its value for connecting people to help each other in daily life. Local currencies bring back this quality of indirect exchange and remind us of social reasons for economy.



Two layers are used on each front side of the banknotes to visualize the 'exchange as basis for connections' and the 're-imagination of a well-visited place'.

The first layer is based on a map of Suomenlinna that serves as input for the arrangement of 800 white dots, representing the inhabitants. Half of the dots are covered with an opaque black spot, meaning that 400 people are employed throughout the year; 100 dots are covered with the colour of the banknote and those represent the 100 additional jobs in summer. All the dots are connected via opaque black lines (the thickness of the lines depends on the value of the banknote), to suggest that the local currency involves everyone and not only people with 'regular' jobs. But the lines do not connect directly—they reach the inner border of the banknote and are reflected back to the island—to represent the quality of the exchange in doing something for one neighbour and getting a Kuula that enables another exchange with a third person. Using this motif should firstly highlight the value of a local currency in establishing local connections ('an offline-connected neighbourhood'), and secondly put the inhabitants—although in an abstract way—in focus, in contrast to most currencies, which feature famous faces. But money should be for exchange and not for representation.

This thought leads to the second layer. Historic



and frequently pictured places face the problem that 'the image' of the place is already established and people (not only visitors) 'see' what they have seen in books, brochures or online. So it is quite hard to get a new perspective on something that already has fixed 'points of view'. This is a good reason to use abstraction again, and to use collected images that tourists (to let them be part of the currency as well) took from Suomenlinna, to generate a background for the banknote.

For each banknote, one search term in addition to 'Suomenlinna' was chosen when searching for images on Flickr. The first hundred items are part of the background. The denomination of the banknote determines the image width: 1 x 3, 3 x 3 or 3 x 9 pixels, which creates compression and a predominantly vertical style. As search terms I used 'sea' for the one Kuula, 'fort' for the three Kuula and 'island' for the nine Kuula; 'sea' and 'fort' are quite obvious to use, less obvious might be 'island', but the results showed a lot of green and 'open' space and that is the reason why I chose it for the highest value. The basic colour for each banknote is also a result of the collected images.

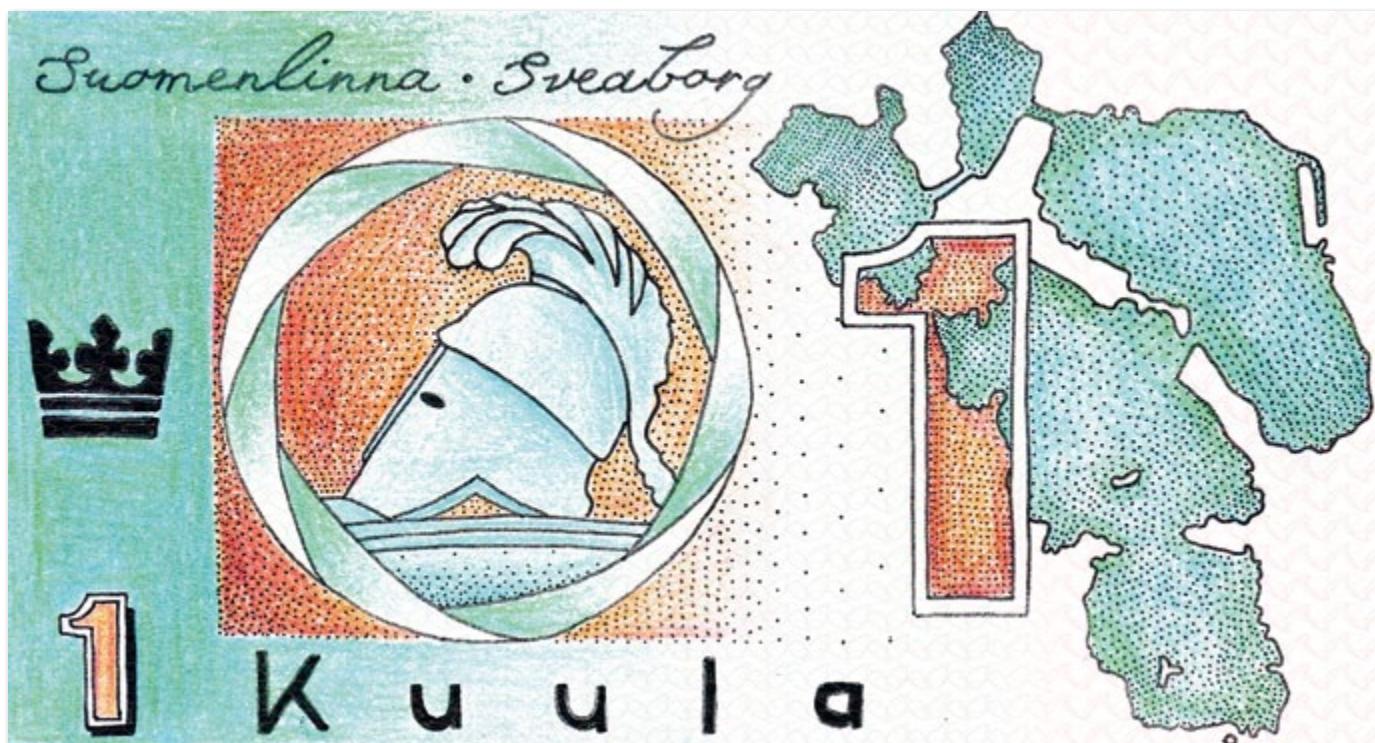
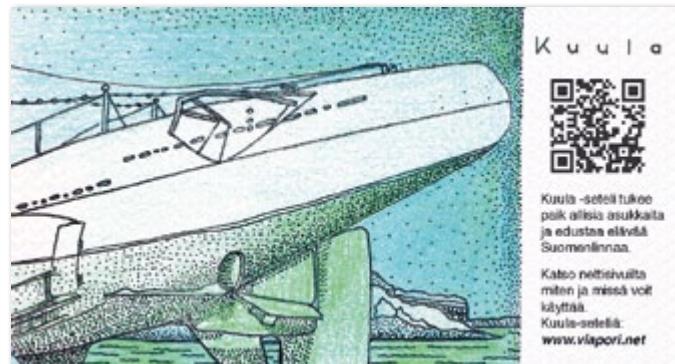
On the back I added an explanatory text (as a suggestion—maybe a more precise text is needed) and the vertically arranged numbers are intended to leave space for security features.

-Richard

10 May 2012

The final design of the Kuula

Christian We produced the final banknote based on Hilla's original sketches and included a two-dimensional barcode and text message suggesting that people can scan the QR code to reach the project website. Due to the rather complex process of finalising the design, we decided that we would only be able to produce a single denomination. This meant that we had to blend the three designs that Hilla had produced into a single banknote. In the end this meant that we used the image of the Suomenlinna submarine rather than the lighthouse, since it was easier to work with and caused the least disagreement. Unfortunately the lighthouse had been one of the main reasons why Hilla's design had been picked. Anyway, these things happen and are part of collaborations, where the process can sometimes make its own choices. I added a few more security features with some algorithmically generated hairlines in the background and the design for the Kuula was finished.



Should we continue with the project?

Most of the people we had met seemed to see the potential of the project and were keen. Only two or three restaurants said that the project was not relevant to them because they already have enough customers in summer time. However the central problem remained, which was that despite the apparent enthusiasm, very few shops or individuals had actually given a firm commitment of their time and energy. Our idea was to put together a group of local enthusiasts that would take a leading role in developing the project further and continuing to run the project once we were gone.

While conducting this mapping operation, we also took our communication strategy to the next phase. During 2011, at the time of Pixelache Festival, a few articles came out, announcing that Christian would be developing a community art project on Suomenlinna. Later in the autumn, an article printed in Suomenlinnan Sanomat described the

ambitions of the Suomenlinna Money Lab and announced its participation in Väkevä Viapori with several activities. Often things become more concrete and more real when people hear about them from the outside or read about them in the newspaper. That is the moment when they understand it is happening right next to them. They might react and try to find out what is really going on. Following this logic, several articles about the project were published in different Finnish papers in February and March 2012. These articles focused on three pieces of information: announcing that Suomenlinna was going to have its own currency in summer, revealing the name of the currency as Kuula and advertising the illustration competition for the banknote design. One could say that communicating this in an assertive manner was rather provocative because we still did not have the firm commitment from a group of enthusiasts to take control of the project.

Kuulia saa lauttarannan rahanvaihtopisteestä Suokille oma valuutta

SUOMENLINNA Suomenlinnan lauttarannassa voi jo kesän korvalta odottaa oma rahanvaihtopiste, jos kokeilseinen taiteen organisaatio Pikseliähky ja brittitaitelija Christian Noldin yhteinen projektti kantaa hedelmää. Yleiskilpailussa kuulaksi nimetty valuutta saa muotona perjantaina päättivässä suunnitelulla.

- Me kartottamme parhaillaan saaren yrityksiä ja kysymme, ketkä olisivat mukana. Tarkoituksena on myös painataa esite, jossa olisivat kaikki valunissa mukana olevat yritykset ja muut palveluntarjoajat, kertoo Pikseliähkyn tiedottaja **Kati Hurme**.

Christian Nold on ollut aiemmin virittämässä vastaanvalaislaista paikallisia valutuuttoja eri maissa. Esimerkiksi vuonna 2010 otettiin käyttöön bijlmer euro eräällä Hollannin monikulttuurisimmalla alueella. Sen avulla Nold nosti nii-

On puhuttu, että valuutan myyntituloja voisi käyttää esimerkiksi nuorisotilan ylläpitoon.

Suomenlinna-seuran puheenjohtaja Jouko Piilola

kyliin taloudellista aktiivisuutta, joka ylistää etnisää raja-aitoja.

- Suomenlinna on muinkas ja kiehtova paikka. Kuulan avulla voimme tavoittaa sen historiallista perintöä, mutta myös sen erikoislaatuksen kokemuksen, joka syntyy, kun asuu ja työskentelee saarella. Projektin on yhteistyötä paikallisten asukkaiten ja Pikseliähkyn kanssa, Christian Nold sanoo.

Suomenlinna-seuran puheenjohtaja Jouko Piilola pitää omia valuuttaa mie-



RYNTÄILYÄÄNKÖ LAUTTARANNASSA
ensi kesänä kuulan vaihtopistereeseen?

lerkointiseksi ajatuksena.

- Myönteisistä on, että yhtenä tavoitteena on saada paikallisiin asukkaille joitain konkreettista hyötyä näistä valtavista turistiviroista. Neihin usein koetaan asumisen kannalta haittaa. On puhuttu, että valutustavat ideoinnikärit voisivat kehittää omia juttujauhan olivat ne sitten nuorisoryötä tai lähirosoan kasvattamista, Nold mietti.

Taitelijan näkökulmasta on kiinnostavaa etsiä saaren fyysisiä ja sosiaalisia

mahdollisuuksia.

- Haan tapoja, joilla voidaan tuoda esin ihmisiin teitä ja sitä, miten ihmiset muokkaavat asuinpaikkojaan. Olisi hieman, jos valutustavat asuvalta saarella asuvat loistavat ideoinnikärit voisivat kehittää omia juttujauhan olivat ne sitten nuorisoryötä tai lähirosoan kasvattamista, Nold mietti.

MARIA SALOMAA



Christian Nold klinnostaa Suomenlinnan historia ja se, että saarella mahtuu turistien lisäksi merisotakoulu ja vankila.

Suomenlinna saattaa saada oman rahan

BRITTITAITEILJA
Christian Nold tekee
yhteisöllistä
taideprojektilä
saarelle.

PIKSELIÄHKY
10.-13. 3.

paikoista. Eivät kaikki saarela setkaan välttämättä ole koskaan käyneet merisotakoulun alueella tai vankilassa."

TAIDEDETTA ja designia episke lu Nold on edellisissä projek tieissä käsitellyt rahaa. Viime vuonna han lanseerasi oman euron. Amsterdamin monikansallinen ja huonomai neisen lähion Bijlmerin etnisiin pikkukauppoihin.

Nold halusi tutkia, mitä alueella tapahtuu, jos siellä olisi käytössä oma valuutta "paikalliseuro". Raha syntyi helposti, liimaamalla bussia ja ratikkalipuissa sisällä oleva si rutarra eurosetteihin. Tun niste tekee rahosta unikkeja, joten niiden liikkumista alueella voi seurata.

HUOMENNA torstaina Suomenlinnassa käynnistyy elektronisen taiteen Pikseliähky-festivaali tuo Helsingin paljon ulkomaisia vieraita. Yksi heistä on lontoolainen taitelija **Christian Nold**, 35.

Nold suunnittelee festivaalin kutsusa Suomenlinnaan yhteisöllistä ja uutta mediaa hyödyntävää taideprojektiä. Sen on määrä valmistua vuonna 2012.

Taitelijaa kiinnostaa Suomenlinnan arkkitehtuuri ja omalaatuinen historia.

- Kesällä Suomenlinna elää turismista. Silloin lautta tuo vierailijoita saarelle kuin metronomin tahtiin. Talvella Suomenlinna taas on pieni, vain noin 850 asukkaan yhteisö", Nold toteaa.

"Suomenlinna on myös so siaalista monikerroksinen paikka, sillä seilla on merisotakoulu ja vankila. Silti aina asia, joka todella yhdistää kaikkia saarelaisia on lautta."

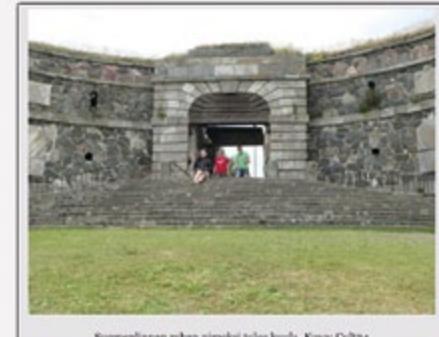
TÄÄNÄÄN keskiviikkona Nold vetää suomenlinnalaisille työpajan. Siellä asukkaat voivat piirtää asuinpaikansa karttaan omia kokemuksia ja tunte muksia erilaisista paikoista. Lopulta Nold yhdistää eri ihmisten piirtämät kartat.

Syntyy kortti, joka kertoo alueesta, sen historiasta ja asukkaiden paljon enemmän kuin virallinen kortta. Nold on vetänyt karttatyöpajoja aiemmin muun muassa Greenwichissä.

Tämä on mainio tapa yhdistää erilaisia kokemuksia Suomenlinna Emotional Map -työpaja keskiviikkona Galleria Augustassa (Susiisaari) klo 18-19. Tarkempi festivaaliohjelma osoliteessa <http://www.pixelache.ac/helsinki/>

Cult24, 10 Feb 2012 Suomenlinna saa oman valuutan

on 10/02/2012 · in MUU KULTTUURI



Suomenlinnan rahan nimikkeet tulivat kulta. Kuva: Cult24

RAHAT. Suomenlinna saa oman rahan, jonka nimikkeet tulivat kulta. Kulta ei tule olemaan virallinen valuutta, vaan vaihtoehtoinen ja täydentävä rahayksikkö, joka on käytössä ainoastaan Suomenlinnan saarella. Rahaprojektiin takana on taiteilijoita ja mediataideorganisaatio Pikseliähky. Kultilla voi ostaa vaikkapa apua lastenhoitoon tai tietokoneen korjaamiseen.

Nyt rahalle etsitään kuvittajaa. Kuvituskilpailun voittajalle on luvassa 1500 euroa.

- Etsimme setelipiirroksia yhden, kolmen ja yhdeksän kuulan arvoisille seteleille. Jokaista setelillä varten tulee suunnitella kuvitus sekä etupuolelle että kääntöpuolelle. Setelien etupuolten kuvitusten tulee olla yksilöllisiä kun taas kääntöpuolten kuvitusten tulee olla visuaalisesti yhtenäisiä, sisältäen setelien numeroisen arvon sekä tilas standarditekstille. Lisäksi kääntöpuolelle tulisi varata jonkin verran tilas QR-koodille (Quick response) sekä muille mahdollisesti myöhempin vahvistuville turvatekijöille. Setelien koon tulisi vastata käytössä olevien euroseteleiden kokolukioita ja mahuta tavallisista lompakoihin ja kassakoneisiin, kilpailun tiedotteessa kerrotaan.

Lisätietoa kuvituskilpailusta tältä.

Cult24

Helsingin Uutiset, 15 Feb 2012 Suomenlinna saa kesällä oman valuutan

ANNELE TUOMINEN-HALOMO

Suomenlinna saa kesällä paikallisen valuutan, kultan. Projektiin tolvoataan rohakeisan paikallista yritystoimintaa. Jos voittoa syntyy, se objoitetaan saaralaisten yhteisiin yleishyödyllisiin projekteihin.

Valutun nimi valittiin saaralaisten ehdottuksesta. Projektiin toteutuvat kokeilusista taiteen, designin, tutkimuksen ja aktivismin organisaatio Pikseliähky sekä viereileva residenssitaiteilija Chris

tian Nold. Hän on loento-lainen taiteilija, designer ja yliopisto-opettaja, joka kehitteli uusia paikallisia ja yhteisöllisiä osallistumisen malleja. Kuvittajaa uudelle valutulle haetaan kilpailulta, joka jatkuv 9. maaliskuuta asti. Kultan valkualle halutaan ilme, joka kuvastaa Suomenlinnaa aina tuulatuusineen ja elävänä maailmanperintökohteena. Kilpailun palkinto-summa on 1500 euroa.

Hankkeen taustalla on Suomenlinna Money Lab -taide- ja tutkimusprojekti. Taitelijaa kiinnostaa Suomenlinnan arkitehtuuri ja omalaatuinen historia.

- Kesällä Suomenlinna elää turismista. Silloin lautta tuo vierailijoita saarelle kuin metronomin tahtiin. Talvella Suomenlinna taas on pieni, vain noin 850 asukkaan yhteisö", Nold toteaa.

"Suomenlinna on myös so siaalista monikerroksinen paikka, sillä seilla on merisotakoulu ja vankila. Silti aina asia, joka todella yhdistää kaikkia saarelaisia on lautta."

MUOTOILUTÄRPIT
Suomen Kuvalehti, 24 Feb 2012
Tee uusi raha

► Suomi saa uuden paikallisenvaluutan tämän vuoden lopulla. Helsingin edustalla Suomenlinnassa käyppien 1. 3 ja 9 kuula-valuutan setelien ulkoasu selviää avoimessa kilpailussa. Kuulaa voi aikanaan ostaa muun muassa Suomenlinnan lautalta. Se käy linnoitussaarten liikeissä yhdistettyinä mak-suvälineenä ja alellus-kuponkina. Yrittäjät vaihtavat kuulat takaisin euroksi, ja asukkaat päättävät yhdessä, miten kertynyt ylijäämä käytetään Suomenlinnan hyväksi. Kilpailu-säännöt www.pixelache.ac/helsinki/kuvituskilpailu.



Viime maaliskuun Pikkeli-äkky-festivaalissa saarelliset saivat piirtää kotikonnistaan tunnekarttoja brittitaitelija Christian Noldin johdolla. Tänä syksynä taitelija palaa saarelle omintakeisen idean kera. Entä jos Suomenlinnassa olisi käytössä oma raha?

Syyskuun alussa Nold järjesti saarella laksi työpajaa, jossa käynnisteltiin tulevaa Suomenlinna Money Lab -projektiä. Sen tavoitteena on paikallisen rahayksikön avulla luoda uusia tulkintoja saaresta elävää ja toimivana ympäristöön.

– Kun itse ensimmäistä kertaa saavuin saarelle, en tiennyt ettei täällä asuu ihmisiä. Sitten tajusin, että tämä ei ole vain historiallinen monumentti, vaan elävä ja toimiva asuinypäristö, Nold kertoo. Kuulin, että täällä on jokus muinoin toiminut leipuri, jolla oli käytössä aivan oma rahayksikkö. Miksei tällaista voisi kokeilla nytkin, hän kysyy.

Rahan vastineeksi yhteisöllistä apua

Projektiin tärkein tavoite on tuoda ihmisiä läheemmäksi toisiaan ja saada aikaan keskustelua arvoista.

Euro, Markka vai Viapori? Oma raha Suomenlinnaan?

Entä jos olisit naapurilla lapsenvahtina ja saisit siitä maksuksi viisi viaporia. Voisit maksaa nillä toiselle naapurille vaikka pyöränhuollon.

Joku toinen voi leipoa sämpylöitä ja maksaa viaporeillaan viruspäivityksen tietokoneeseensa. Suomenlinnan omaa rahaa ideoidaan Väkevän Viaporin aikaan.

Yksi mahdollinen käyttötapa Suomenlinnan rahayksikölle on, että siitä saisi vastineeksi hieman yhteisöllistä apua tai vaikkapa itsesavatettuja vihanneksia.

Jos on esimerkiksi halukas silloin tällöin toimimaan lastenvahtina tai on erityisen näppärä tietokoneasioissa, voi tarjota palvelujaan näissä asioissa. Samalla tulee tukeneeksi saaren taloutta ja ehkä myös tutustuneeksi uusiin ihmisiin.

Käyttöraha asukkaille ja turisteille

Käytännössä projektin tuloksena voisi syntyä oikea käyttöraha, josta hyötyisivät kaikki saaren asukkaat.

Projektiin kautta suomenlinnalaiset voivat vuorovaikuttaa uudella tavalla sekä keskenään että saarella vierailivien ihmisten kanssa, ehkä jopa ansaita muutaman euron ylimääräisistä.

Nold on aiemmin toteuttanut Blijmer-euro projektiin Amsterdamissa, jossa Blijmerin lähiön paikalliset pierryttilijät saivat runsasta mediahuomiota ja uusia asiakkaita tarjoamaan pieniä alennuksia paikallista rahaan vastaan. Turisteille kaunis ja eksoottinen seteli voi tietysti olla myös matkamuisto.

Syyskuussa järjestettyyn työpajaan osallistui muun muassa muusikko Robin DeWan.

– Itse voisin tarjota Suomen-

linnan rahasta vastineeksi vaikkapa didgeridoo-tunteja tai englanninkielisten tekstien oikolukua, DeWan ideoi.

Tykkikuulista kolikoita?

Noldin mukaan riippuu Suomenlinnan asukkaista, millaisen rahan he saatavat käyttöönsä.

– Tämä projekti on vasta alussa ja avoin kaikille, jotka haluavat osallistua. Toivon, että suomenlinnalaiset tulevat mukaan suunnittelemaan sekä itse rahaa että erilaisia käyttötarkoituksia sillä. Villitkin ideat ovat terveutulleita. Innostuin kovasti, kun kuulin että Suomenlinnassa on kiloaukvalta vanhoja tykkikuulia. Ehkäpä

Syyskuun alussa pidetyissä työpajoissa käynnistettiin Suomenlinna Money Lab -projektiä.

voisimme sulattaa vähän rautaa ja lyödä kolikoita, Nold visioi.

Hän mielestäni myös tulevan rahayksikön nimi voisi olla jotakin, joka kuvastaa juuri Suomenlinnaa.

– Projektin tavoitteena on, että se jää elämään suomenlinnalaisen omana juttuna, jonka me vain yhdessä aloitimme.

Seuraavat työpajat Väkevässä Viaporissa

Seuraavan kerran Christian Nold saapuu saarelle Väkevä Viapori -festivaalin aikaan. Perjantaina 21.10. hän järjestää kaikille avoimen työpajan Taidekoulu MAA:ssa. Lauantaina ja sunnuntaina hän on tavattavissa Suomenlinna Money Lab -projektin tapahtumapisteessä Siwan edustalla (sateen sattuessa kioskin aulassa). Christian toivoa, että kaikki projektista kiinnostuneet tulevat juttusille ja kertovat ideoistaan. *

Kati Hurme



Brittitaitelija Christian Noldin johdolla suunnitellaan Suominan omia rahaia.

Suomenlinna Money lab -projekti Väkevässä viaporissa

PERJANTAI 21.10.

8-10, Suomenlinnan elä-aste
Rahanvälärennystäjä
Raha-aiheista askartelua ja keskustelua Christianin johdolla.

12.30 – 14.30 Taidekoulu MAA
Suomenlinna Money Lab -työpaja
Christian alustaa paikallisen valutun toiminnasta. Keskustelu ja Suomenlinnan oman rahayksikön ideoointia. Avoin kaikille kiinnostuneille!

LAUANTAI 22.10.

12:00 – 18:00, Siwan edusta (Sateen sattuessa Kioskin aula)
Let's talk about money! Christian esitteli Suomenlinna Money Lab -projektiä ja ottaa vastaan ideoita Suomenlinnan oman rahan nimistä ja ulkoasusta Siwan edessä. Ideat palkitaan kahvikupillisellä!

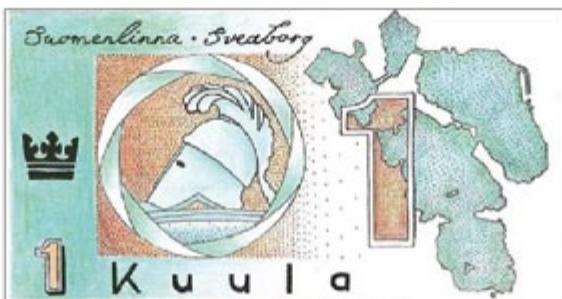
SUNNUNTAI 23.10.

12.00 – 18.00 Siwan edusta (Sateen sattuessa Kioskin aula)
Let's talk about money! Christian esitteli Suomenlinna Money Lab -projektiä ja ottaa vastaan ideoita Suomenlinnan oman rahan nimistä ja ulkoasusta Siwan edessä. Ideat palkitaan kahvikupillisellä!

17.00 – 18.00 avoin suunnittelukokous Kioskin aulassa.

Tervetuloa!

Tällainen on Suomenlinnan paikallisvaluutta – katso kuva



Hilla Mäkelän ehdotus voitti Suomenlinnan paikallisvaluutan Kuvan kuvituskilpailun.

PAIKALLISTE | 10.5.2012 11:00, Päiväys: 10.5.2012 18:44 | Kommentteja 24 |

Suomenlinnan paikallisvaluutan kuvituskilpailun voitti helsinkiläinen Hilla Mäkelä.

Mäkelä esitteli Suomenlinnassa Taidekoulua Maassa nykytaiteilijan animatiin valmistavalla linjalla. Palkitsemisperusteissa mainitaan, että ehdotuksessaan Mäkelä on tuonut rakkauden taidalle sekä modernin että historisen puolen Suomenlinnasta.

Voittajan valitsi Suomenlinnan yhteisöstä koottu rats. Lopullinen versio setelistiä tullaan työstämään Mäkelän ehdotuksen perustella.

Kilpailun järjestäjä toimii Pikseliähky, joka on kymmenisen vuotta toiminut monialainen kokeilijoiden taiteen, designin, tutkimuksen ja aktivismin organisaatio.

Suomenlinnan valuuta liittyy Suomenlinna Money Lab -talje- ja tutkimusprojektille, jota vottaa brittitaitelija Christian Nold.

– Kuula-setelistiä aletaan jakaa jossakin valheessa keskä lättörannan läheisyydestä. Ne ovat erittäin laisia alienuskuponkeja, joilla saat alennusta sijoitteluista, joita kerätään viapori.net-sivustolle, taitelija Nold selostaa.

Taitelijana Nold kehittää uusia paikallisen ja yhteisöllisen osallistumisen malleja. Taitaiseen kannustaa myös Suomenlinnan oma valuutta.

– Tämä on turistien ja suomenlinnalaisien sekä Suomenlinnassa toimivien taitelijoiden kontaktointia.

Kuula-setelistiä aletaan jakaa jossakin valheessa keskä

Suomentinnan Sanomat, nro 1/2011

Pikseliähky saapuu Suomenlinnaan

Tervetuloa Pikseliähkyn 11.–12.3.! Elektronisen taiteen festivaali tapahtuu tänä keväänä ensimmäistä kertaa Suomenlinnassa ja kaikki saaren asukkaat ovat tervetulleita osallistumaan.

Festivaali järjestetään jo kymmenettä kertaa, ai-kempina vuosina pää-tapahtumapaikkana on ollut Nykytaiteen Museo Kiasma.

Nuorten tekijöiden kokeellisia projekteja

Pikseliähky-festivaalin yksi tärkeimmin lähestäkseen on tarjota tekijöille mahdollisuus kokeilla uusia ideioita ja esittää teoksiayleisölle jo niiden tekovaheessa. Suurin osa festivaalista teokset esitelläänkin yleisölle ensimmäistä kertaa.

Festivaaliin osallistuu vuosittain noin 100 kansainvälisiä vierastaka sekä monipuolinen joukko kotimaisia tekijöitä – taiteilijoita, tutkijoita, designereita, harrastajia ja aktivisteja.

Festivaalin nimi Pikseliähky (englanniksi 'Pixelache') kuvastaa digitaalisen median yliäntostusta. Alkuvuosina tämä termi kuvasi tyvin festivaalin ohjelmistoa, joka painotti audiovisualiseen mediaan.

Vuosien varrella ohjelmisto on kuitenkin monipuolistunut ja painottunut yhteiskunnallisesti ajankohtaisiin teemoihin ja projekteihin. Tämän kevään festivaalin nimi voi yhä hyvin olla 'Biaähky', sillä monet projekteista liittyvät luontoon ja ekologisiin kysymyksiin.

Puutarhureita ja keittiövelhoja

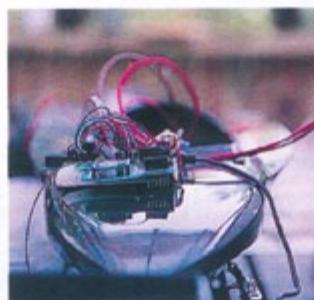
Perjantaina 11.3. Pajasalessa aulassa on mahdollista oppia tekemään 'siemenpalloja' – savesta tehtyjä palloja jotka sisältävät yhdistelmän useiden kotimaisien kasvien siemenien. Jokainen pallo sisältää omien pienien ekosysteeminsä – siemenet on valittu siten, että niistä syntyvät kasvit voivat auttaa toisiaan kukoistamaan. Pallo suojelee siemeniä linnuiltä ja sisältää myös tarvittavan ravinteiden niiden alkuaijalajeille.

Pikseliähkynä voi myös oppia kuinka kasvien yhteyttämistä tutkimalla syntyy sähkövirtaa ja herkullisia ruokalajeja taikka pirttää omien kasvihahmon osaksi kokeellista tietokonepellia.

Nämä päivittäin vaihtuvat työpajat ovat osa kansainvälisen FoAM-taiteilijaryhmän suunnittelemaa Groworld Bazaar -ohjelmaa, joka tutkii ihmisten ja kasvien suhdetta.

Avoimia työpajoja, keskusteluja ja näyttelyitä

Lauantaina 12.3. festivaali leviää myös ympäri Suomenlinnaa



Uusi taideteos Suomenlinnaan ensi vuonna

Pikseliähky on kutsunut brittitaitelijan Christian Noldin toteuttamaan uuden taideteoksen vuosien 2011–2012 aikana. Christian on valinnut teoksen sijaintiksi Suomenlinnan, se tullee olemaan eräänlainen 'työkalupakki' saaren asukkaille ja vierailijoille.

Christianin alkaisempia projekteja ovat mm. Amsterdamin lähiössä käytöön

otettu oma valuutta (Bijmer Euro) sekä kaupunkien synnyttämien tunnetilojen kartat (Brentford Biopsy: East Paris Emotion Map, jne).

Lisätietoja verkossa

Tarkempia tietoja festivaalin ohjelmasta löytyy osoitteesta www.pixelache.ac.

Nähdään Pikseliähkyyssä! *

Juba Huuskonen
Pikseliähky-festivaalin taiteellinen johtaja

email | 9 Mar 2012

From a shopkeeper

Hi everybody,

I am really wondering what this project is all about?

How can someone communicate in the media (and how on earth can this media even go for this?) that a new local currency will soon be in circulation in the local shops—when this thing hasn't at least been agreed with me, and when as far as I know, the other businesses on the island are not in it either. The Money Lab's way to force this project doesn't trigger any positive feelings in me. Keep your damn 'Kuulas' to yourself, I say.

email | 9 Mar 2012

Reply from the Money Lab team

Hello,

We heard about your reaction on the Suomenlinna residents' mailing list related to our article in the local paper. We have strived to keep this project as open and transparent as possible from the start. We have organised workshops on the island and during Väkevä Viapori, we set up an info desk, where we gave information about the project. We have encouraged people to ask questions, comment and join us in planning the project further together. In addition, we have also tried to contact and meet as many shopkeepers and service providers as possible, but we haven't yet managed to get in touch with everyone personally. We would be happy to meet you to tell you more and answer questions you might have about our project. Would you be available to meet us next week for instance, when the main designer of the project, Christian Nold, is in Suomenlinna? We are also planning to organise a public discussion about the project as soon as possible.

Pixelache is a non-profit cultural association. Any Suomenlinna Money Lab profits will be redirected towards common Suomenlinna residents' projects.

9 Mar 2012

Open rejection from a shopkeeper

Nathalie We received some strong reactions, after an article had come out in the island's local newspaper Suomenlinnan Sanomat, announcing the name of Suomenlinna's new currency and that it was happening. This email exchange (translated from Finnish) took place between the owner of a shop on Suomenlinna and the Money Lab team. The tone in the shopkeeper's emails really took us by surprise. How could our project create such a bad feeling among people on the island?

In the email, a whole range of issues emerge about participation, control, money and place. The exchange with

email | 9 Mar 2012

Reply from the shop owner

Hi,

It is irritating to read in the paper that there is a local currency in the making on the island where I also work as an entrepreneur, that would function as a means of payment in the island's shops, and would give the right to discounts. That type of message you are massively spreading to papers! This message is inconsistent as long as most of the island's businesses are not part of it. It is false and prematurely given. I had thought that the project would become a means of exchange to support neighbourly assistance. Such a hustle I do understand, even though I am not interested in taking part in it. Whatever amount of events you might have organised to inform us about this, I haven't participated because the issue doesn't interest me and I don't think it's professionally relevant to my business. As an entrepreneur, I am the one to decide which means of payment are accepted by my company, whether I give discounts and for whom, and whether I, above all, want to make customer service more complicated with different payment options. It would be fair when you mentioned being so open in your communication, that you write publicly which of the island's entrepreneurs you have met in person and who has committed to your project.

email from Christian | 12 Mar 2012

Crazy stuff seems to be happening. We really do need to find out what is going on and reconsider our position. I think the Community Association might be a good place just so that they own it. In terms of who to invite I think it should be anyone and everyone. We need to have some enthusiastic people there otherwise I am not sure how we can continue. So people from shops who already want to be part of things would be good as well as new people!

email | 12 Mar 2012

Reply from the Money Lab team

Hi!

We are sorry to hear that our project is irritating you. Suomenlinna Money Lab is an art and research project, and nobody is obliged to take part in it. Our aim is not to get all the island's businesses to participate, even though it would be great if that would happen. The project can very well function with the participation of a limited amount of businesses. Any business and service provider who finds the project meaningful and who sees business value in it are welcome. Because all the businesses are different, it's up to them to decide how they want to benefit from the local currency. For this reason, we have tried to organise face-to-face meetings with as many entrepreneurs and service providers as possible, to discuss different ideas with them. We have met over 10 entrepreneurs from the island and will continue to do so over the next weeks and months. We have noticed that it is easier to communicate the project in face-to-face meetings and we've had useful and interesting discussions with entrepreneurs who have decided not to take part in the project. We would be happy to meet you this week, even if you are not interested in joining the project.

reflection by Christian | 12 Mar 2012

We are dealing with the island as an entity. More than a vague contemporary idea of 'identity' it's more like the island is a big part of people's notion of self. People feel attacked because we are trying to change the island, which is positioned in Swedish time, that's why the Governing Body reacts against us. They are literally the cultural/identity guardians of the place. Hence the woman's suggestion that we need at least half the shops on the island to agree, in order to receive the island's stamp of approval. Do the people who are enthusiastic about the island think of themselves as islanders? Maybe the island means—no change!

If this is the case, should we be trying to change the context? Is it possible to add a layer to the story of the place without threatening the identity? Even though the island is a fortress it appears a fragile, vulnerable thing. It's a very romantic concept of place but also really oppressive at the same time.

the shopkeeper ended abruptly, as she never replied to our second email and didn't accept an invitation for a face-to-face meeting. Even though she complained about not having been consulted, she didn't want to meet when we offered it. Why did she challenge us to publish the list of participating businesses? I might be wrong, but her tone echoed the language of the Governing Body's spokeswoman, "nobody wants to participate in your project". Her first email to the Community Association mailing list was also cc:ed to the spokeswoman. Was this all part of an organised campaign against us?

13 Mar 2012

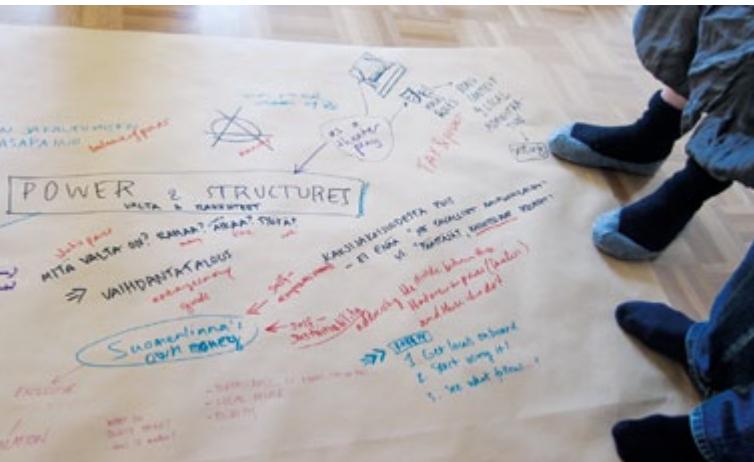
Suomenlinna looks so close to the mainland

Christian I arrived in Helsinki late in the evening and was surprised that the snow had gone. At certain times of the year you can look across to Suomenlinna from Helsinki harbour and the island looks so tantalisingly close. This evening the lighthouse was bright and prominent but there were also lots of other lights flashing on the island. Suomenlinna didn't look like a scary entity sitting in the ocean but more like a pleasure palace where people go for outings and gambling. When I arrived with the ferry and dragged my suitcase across the cobblestones, I wondered if the sounds echoing off the ancient arches were the only authentic history that remains in this place.

14 Mar 2012

Meeting the Reality Research Center: thinking in similar ways

Christian We had a meeting with the Reality Research Center www.todellisuus.fi/en, a Helsinki artist group that works on interventions in everyday life. We visited them at their studio and had some great discussions with them and were totally shocked when they showed us a diagram from their brainstorming session where they had come up with their own concept for a local currency for Suomenlinna. It made us feel that we were not alone and that others were thinking in similar ways and opened the possibility of collaborating with them. They suggested making the currency more personal by using the handprint of every resident on the money, "this is me and it has my handprint on it." Making each banknote personal emphasises the art side of the project and makes the banknotes more attractive for outsiders to buy. It is a functioning currency with extra value. It will be more than the euro, which has no personality and aims at abstraction. They made some very interesting comments



notes | 13 Mar 2012

A student's opinion as told to Christian

The Governing Body is a big problem. It feels alien—pain in ass—that is a nice way to say it. They have these really strange rules. Everything is forbidden. You have to ask permission for everything. It's very difficult to make art projects there. We study there and if we ask something then it's, "No, no." There is this kindergarten that has historic prison cells. People don't know about them. The Governing Body doesn't want people to know about them. They should be public. They were used to imprison people during the civil war and after that it was a jail until the 1960s. Nobody knows that they are there. We asked if we could access them but the Governing Body said, "No, no." In the end we did go there and took photos. The experience was very nice but it did not feel good because we had to do it secretly. I don't know if there are more of these places. In general the Governing Body is not open for collaboration. They are just ruling the place. It is hard. We called ten different people to ask permission to access the prison cells but all they said was "We'll give you another number" and "Call me again another time." They shouldn't be like this. The island is special. The Governing Body ruins everything. They are projecting the island so much. There is no transparency in the criteria for who gets to stay there.



about the peculiarity of Finnishness and the dynamics of the island. They mentioned that Suomenlinna has this reflexive defence mechanism. Since it is so hard to get the permission to live on Suomenlinna, the locals feel both privileged and nervous about change coming from the outside. The Reality Research Center talked about this common feeling in Finland that there is 'us' and 'them', but there is actually no real sense of 'us'. There is only an imaginary 'us', which is not reflected in reality. There are some organisations who try to control this 'us' and claim to speak with a collective voice. In the end we asked them to write an essay for this book, which resulted in Pekko Koskinen's reflections on the playfulness of creating money.

14 Mar 2012

The Japanese tearoom in the Finnish fortress

Christian We met with an amazing guy who runs a Japanese tea room on Suomenlinna whose aim is to teach the practice of tea www.urasenke.fi/tokuyuan.shtml. The tea room is built inside the space of an old ammunition storage bunker within the fortress. The tea room had cost €1 million to build and had involved Japanese architects flying out to the island to construct the specialist structure. People pay for membership to learn the Japanese tea ceremony as well as having special sweets and tea. Talking about Somenlinna, he said, "it's a bit difficult to get there quickly but that is part of it as well. Going from the normal world to the beyond. We don't have a garden surrounding the house. We think of the island as the garden and the ferry as the movement." It was a fascinating conversation where he revealed he was both a visual artist and a car engineer and currently studying for an MA in tea. We discussed the currency project and he was very excited about finding ways of exchanging things and ideas with locals and visitors. He had already been thinking about alternative money systems and told us about the Disney Dollar. His suggestion was to set up a stall on the ferry to communicate the project and the diversity of Suomenlinna to visitors.

16 Mar 2012

A final call for participation at the Community Association

Christian After being confronted with open rejection we felt it was critical to understand where we stood in regard to the residents' support. Despite the enthusiasm that we witnessed at Väkevä Viapori and the encouraging participation in the name poll, the recent rumours and confrontations had shocked us deeply. Without speaking about it openly, each of us felt that we had reached a make-or-break moment.

We set up a public meeting at the Community Association. Unfortunately only two local residents came to the meeting. One was a craftswoman making and selling her work on the island, while the other worked for a local arts organisation. We explained our situation of needing to make a decision about continuing to gather a critical mass of people or to give up the project. The craftswoman was personally very positive and said she had previously chatted with the other seven craftspeople who communally run the shop and they said, they liked the project. She thought that the mailing list was not so useful for contacting people but that locals need to be personally contacted. We asked her why she thought we might be getting these weird reactions from some people. Her response was that people did not get involved

[email](#) | 12 Mar 2012

Suomenlinna Money Lab team to the Community Association mailing list

Hi!

We have heard that islanders have been having discussions and wondering about the Suomenlinna Lab Project a lot lately. For us it is essential to know what islanders (entrepreneurs and inhabitants in general) think of this process and where they would like to see it go, because it is not a project we are doing for ourselves but for Suomenlinna. We have always believed that this is an open and voluntary 'opt-in' process, which we do not want to force anyone into. Suomenlinna Money Lab is a research and social art project that is meant to support local entrepreneurs and provide funding for locally beneficial projects. Therefore we all invite you to join the meeting that will take place on Friday 16.3. at 18:00 in the Community Association office, so we can have an open discussion about it.

because they are busy, "I don't think people are really against it—they are just lazy," she argued that "it's a small community and people are not really active". The woman from the local arts organisation said, "I am surprised, I thought there would be a lot more people." They asked if key local people such as Jussi the festival organiser and Mauno the designer were involved and we had to explain the communication issues that had happened. In terms of the money system, the craftswoman said that she understood how the currency would benefit the community but she was not so clear what the benefits would be for them personally. The most useful thing for her was the map, which would bring people to their shop. There was some worry about increasing the number of tourists since they already have 25,000 visitors per year at the shop. They need a way of attracting the right kind of people who want to buy something. Offering discounts is difficult. In the past, the craftspeople had discussed offering discounts for local people but rejected them because their margins are very tight. We discussed ways of making things unique with a local currency stamp that does not cost any money but adds to the specialness of buying something directly from the craftspeople. There was a discussion about building a cash machine on the island that could dispense local currency to make it easier to get hold of Kuula. We looked at some of the money competition designs as well as the children's designs. The discussion focused on the ideas that the notes should not look too similar to normal money but 'a bit stranger' and more like an artwork that would have more value as a souvenir. The woman from the local arts organisation said, "I think its an interesting idea but if the people who have the services here are not going in for it... then the timebank idea is something I would go in for." Again we felt that we had met some lovely local people and had a really positive discussion, but we had to remind ourselves that only two people had turned up and we had not resolved if we should continue the project.

17 Mar 2012

The ‘lifting the cat onto the table’ meeting *(Nostetaan kissa pöydälle -kokous)*

Nathalie The day after Christian’s arrival we had a heavy production meeting. Christian spoke first. His feeling about the meeting at the Community Association was that we needed people who really want to commit to this project. If we did not get them involved, we could not go ahead. Suvi explained that she was the person who did most of the communications and got exposed to all the negative reactions. Talking about her experiences, Suvi got very emotional and quite defensive. She said the project felt like a massive burden to her. “I am not really enjoying this anymore because I am getting negative reactions. I am doing most of the contacting. I don’t really know how to explain what the project is all about. Contacting people and getting to meet people is really difficult. Convincing people is hard.” Trying to keep a perspective on this reaction, we explored if there were any positive reactions or encounters. In Suvi’s eyes, the most positive were the craftspeople. We discussed what would make this money become real for people. Would we need to print the banknote and have a functioning currency before people would take it seriously? Would it be enough to have two to three shops where people could buy things with the local money to make it real? Or would all the shops on the island and every single local person have to agree to use it?

It had become clear for Suvi and myself that people do not want any hassle, they do not want to think about the currency but they would like it if they see that it actually works and brings them benefits. We often heard people say “we don’t want to be involved at this stage. We want to see how it goes.” People are not prepared to take any risk until it was working...

Christian’s reaction was that, “if it requires us to make a fully working currency then I don’t see why they would suddenly take ownership when it’s working. It’s like a sewer pipe that is not broken, nobody is going to worry about it while it works. I had hoped people would see this project like an active resource. To use a gardening metaphor—I thought some people would say gardening is boring but others would want to use the land and plant their own garden. Then suddenly a discussion about how to govern this garden resource would become necessary. So people might discuss if there should there be a fence or not. Of course, you cannot ignore that there is always a difference between the initiator of a project and the participants. You cannot force people to be autonomous and share your vision. It is meant to be about happiness and pleasure at the end of the day.”

When Christian stated that, “a local currency is 70% imagination and 30% economics. The affective bit is not working”; a discussion about the dilemma of imagination emerged. We wanted to start a process of co-designing something with

people based on a shared vision. Did we really want to end up making a top-down and tokenistic currency with just eight shops, where we do all the work to organise things and which might disappear after the pilot period? To what extent can you facilitate a shared imagination? Would anybody ever want to take responsibility and ownership and continue running a top-down local currency?

We decided that at this point we had to put a stop to this way of working. We had gone as far as we could to try to make the currency idea become tangible for people by organising workshops, using the media and even creating a banknote design. These strategies failed in making it more ‘real’ and exciting for people on Suomenlinna.

18 Mar 2012

The turning point meeting

Nathalie A few months previously I had moved to a cosy apartment on Museokatu to which I invited the project team as well as Andrew for an evening of brainstorming about the project at this difficult juncture. We had some food and Christian proposed making some gin & tonics with gin he had brought from England. Yet nobody seemed to be interested, which might have been an early sign of tension. He prepared them anyway, and I remember that I had one like everyone else and it felt very good after all. We talked to Andrew and told him everything that had happened.

We first discussed the way in which we tried to build a community of people who cared about the project. Andrew asked how regularly we organised events that people could come to where we talked about what had been done and what was still to be done. If we had, for instance, organised events in some of the shops or cafés. We did organise gatherings in different places like the library, the Ice Cellar, the Community Association office, but not very regularly. And were they too formal in style? Andrew reminded us that Suomenlinna is a small community overburdened with authority and pointed out that the events we had organised might have used the same formal mannerisms as the Governing Body. Andrew suggested hanging out more in the cafés or bars and just talking with people about the project. For instance after the name for the currency was chosen, we could have invited everyone to celebrate the new name.

A lot of the discussion revolved around the Governing Body and why they were not interested in the project. Andrew asked if a report on the economic value of the project would be more persuasive for them. Our feeling was that the Governing Body had been actively trying to hinder the project. From our perspective there was no rational reason why they should be so opposed to it. Would an economic argument convince shops more? Why was the idea of a local currency—which would be a revenue source for local projects and which would boost the image of the island—be so

strongly opposed by the institutional players? Andrew suggested that we should have an investigative journalist look at the matter in order to uncover the power structures of the island. A journalist would be more neutral than us, and might be able to interview people who were critical of the project.

We questioned the participation model that we had used and which involved trying to enrol a mass of participants. Andrew argued that there is always someone who starts and others who decide to join. What local social capital does the initiator of a project need to have, in order to start a project? Andrew basically felt that this kind of enrolment is intrinsic to these projects but different people are in more powerful positions to make it happen, while others are not. This is to do with being an insider or having social capital.

We also talked about the idea of a utopian club that could support productive sharing between the enthusiastic individuals on the island. Christian imagined we could give tourists a membership to the utopian island. They would get utopian money and get to meet other people in the utopian club and experience something like an alternative vision of the island. I guess we felt some responsibility for the amazing but rather isolated people that we had met and who wanted to build connections with each other and the visitors to the island.

Finally we decided there was no point in building more fantasies of collaboration. After a long evening of discussion we decided to abandon the idea of a functioning alternative currency, and to concentrate on documenting and analysing the process in the form of a book. Andrew said, “the collection of people who are actually enthusiastic, that’s the best result that you can have for the project... also if you manage to get some clarity on why people dislike it, then that’s just as good a result and then you would have an understanding of both sides of the argument.” Christian said, “if a currency happens at some point in the future, I hope it will have a trace of our values embedded. I would like it to have some utopian feeling. A little bit of otherness.”

We came up with the idea of printing the Kuula banknotes and distributing them to each letterbox on the island. A personal letter from us would be added to explain what we had done and ask people to comment. The idea was to create a handwritten love letter to the island that talked about our feelings about the project. I guess it was going to be like a letter about having been rejected. While we liked the emotional openness of this idea we thought that handwriting was too manipulative and went for a personal but professional tone. The letter would have a link to a website and an anonymous online questionnaire for people to tell us where we went wrong. This would be our last communication with the residents of Suomenlinna and a farewell to the island.

After that evening we decided to focus on documenting the project. We imagine we felt a sense of relief because we could actually start working again. Our attempts to enrol people and mixed messages about people’s commitment had

placed us into paralysis limbo. Now we could do something that felt like an honest way to proceed.

13 Aug 2012

A homestay on the island

Christian To document the project we decided that the team should physically meet up again and talk through our experiences before starting to write. It was a strange feeling coming back to Suomenlinna with the new purpose of creating a book about our own experiences on the island. In the past whenever I had stayed on the island, it had always been at the artist residency accommodation or at the youth hostel. This time, Nathalie had organised for me to stay with a couple who were running something like a Bed & Breakfast on the island in their own home.

I arrived late in the evening but the couple were still up, and we started chatting since it turned out that they knew about our project. They had received one of the leaflets that we had handed out at the festival and had gone to the project website to read about it in more detail. It quickly became clear that they understood the project very well and were enthusiastic. They got very excited and spontaneously bombarded me with a large range of ideas that they would like see happening on the island. They were frustrated and thought the potential of the island was underused. They excitedly told me that there should be more things on the island for visitors to experience what it was like to live there hundreds of years ago. They suggested organising events where people could bake their own bread and set up historical food banquets with storytelling and historical music. They suggested setting up a studio where visitors could build their own wooden boat or help to build the special local paved roads. They told me about a special limited edition Suomenlinna souvenir wine which was made as a celebration and was very popular. They even talked about the fact that local people on the island have special skills such as alternative medicine treatments and could offer home cooked meals as services for each other and for visitors. They suggested using Restaurant Day, when people across the whole of Helsinki cook food and sell it to each other in the street and adapting so that people would use the Suomenlinna currency to buy food on the island.

I was shocked, excited but also saddened because we had already decided to abandon the project because we had not seen enough of this energy. I told them that these were all brilliant ideas but why had they not got in touch with us before? They became a little evasive and said they had been busy... Then they returned to offering suggestions of projects. When again I asked why these great ideas are not currently happening on the island they said, “there must be somebody doing it, and then there are followers.” I told them about the problems we had been having reaching people so I asked them why they thought people might not have been enthusiastic. They responded that they felt the island had

a village mentality and that Finnish people are somewhat different and have a resistance to new and unknown things. I asked if the project was seen as coming from the outside, they agreed and suggested how crucial it would have been to get important key local people excited and get them to communicate the project to others. They had not heard of a local discussion about the project and they only learnt about it through the newspaper, brochure and website. They talked about many of the problematic things the Governing Body had done, "they don't sit down and try and be creative." The Governing Body does not like the homestay they are offering. "We are the only family doing homestays—ninety per cent of people think we are sick." In fact they had faced a whole range of complex legal problems in trying to set up their homestay. They felt this was a real shame since having more homestays could create more contact between locals and visitors and the income could offset the rent increases. "Many people have big flats here and there could be 20 or 30 families offering this and building up a concept of this. If you had enough of this then you would have a concept." I felt I had met some more local people who also had a great project for Suomenlinna which was similar to our own and who had also been left frustrated and isolated.

15 Aug 2012

Conversation with Teppo

Nathalie I called Teppo to invite him to a barbecue dinner at Christian's homestay on the island. It was a good opportunity to give him an update on the project. He did not know that we had developed the project that far and said he was really proud of us! He said that the other day when he had sat on the ferry and passed Mauno's house, he had told his friend how disappointed he was with the people on the island that they did not make this project happen.

Suomenlinnan Kuula-seteli Siinulle



Hyvä Suomenlinnan asukas,

Kädesäsi on Kuula-seteli. Tämä on lahja meiltä sinulle. Joähvyväiskohja...

Olemme Christian Nold Lontoosta ja Nathalie Aubret Helsingistä. Puhuimme alkuvuodesta 2011 monille teistä paikallisvaluutan perustamisesta Suomenlinnaan. Idea oli alunperin Christianin, joka oli ollut mukana perustamassa paikallisvaluutta Hollantiin vuonna 2010 sekä osunut monilla paikkakunnilla joissa käytetään toimivaa paikallisvaluuttaa. Nathalie puolestaan työskentelee kulttuuriorganisaatio Päkseliähyksässä, jonka kutsusta Christian saapui toteuttamaan paikallisen taideprojektiin Helsingissä.

Koska pidämme molemmat hyvin paljon Suomenlinnastoa, ajattelimme että jonkinlainen turisteja jättämän soarelle hieman

5 Sept 2012

Saying goodbye to the island by distributing a love letter and a Kuula

Nathalie On a beautiful afternoon, Laura and I took the ferry to the island carrying a heavy bag full of love letters. I felt a little bit awkward, full of anxiety about the possibility of meeting people who were hostile to the project, while hoping to meet people who were sympathetic. I felt a need to hide as well as a curiosity to talk to people. Yet on an early afternoon on a weekday, most houses were empty and we did not see many residents in the streets either. We separated at Mauno's house and I continued towards several big residential houses. In Finland letterboxes are usually small slots integrated into the front door. It felt strange to slide the first letter through the letter-box. Sticking your fingers through a slot into someone's home and getting a sense of the place's smell is a rather strange experience. In the very first house I visited, I felt the hot breath of a dog coming very close to my hand, and I thought "postmen's lives are made of this." Not knowing what was behind the doors, I quickly pushed the letters inside. The image of an 'anti-spam mail finger grinder' that would cut your fingers as you were stuffing in the paper came to mind and vanished. When I left the last house, I saw a lonely meowing kitty on the top floor, trying to get back into its home. But except for this animal, I encountered no one.

I crossed back to the main island and started to walk towards the large row of houses next to the church, where a few children were playing in the sun. In the first of these buildings,

I saw interesting stuff hanging on the doors, like small amulets that were telling something about the people who live there. I started taking pictures of the doors in order to document these weird displays, and put on the bold face of a postman. Some of the amulets were welcoming, some naïve and some mysterious. At a few houses, I heard a person coming towards the door to pick up the mail, which felt unsettling. The decorations on the doors and the brief opening of the letter slots were my only connections to these private lives while distributing the love letter.



After a few hours of walking, the letter was finally out there. There was something religious about the feeling of having climbed stairs up and down, like the stations of the cross. This was our last direct intervention in Suomenlinna, our mission was sort of over and I felt light when we got back to the ferry. The idea of my empty bag made me happy. There had been something of a cathartic process to this postal activity.

love letter | 5 Sept 2012

A Kuula banknote for you

Dear Suomenlinna resident,
You have a Kuula in your hands. Please take this money as a gift from us to you. A parting gift ...
My name is Christian Nold and this is Nathalie Aubret. We are from London and Helsinki respectively. In early 2011 we started talking to lots of local people about the idea of setting up some kind of local currency on Suomenlinna. The idea came from Christian who has lived in many places that have their own functioning local money and in 2010 he even set up a currency in Holland. Nathalie works for the cultural association Pixelache who invited Christian to realise a local project in Helsinki. She has lived on Suomenlinna and knows the island well and we both thought some kind of currency for Suomenlinna would really support life on the island and encourage tourists to leave a bit more money on the island. We had some ideas on how this local money project might work but we were looking for people to brainstorm with and make it something unique and useful for Suomenlinna. Anyway in 2011, we started talking to people on Suomenlinna by organising some meetings in cafes and the library. Not many people came, so we talked directly to some of the local

restaurants, cafes and other businesses. The people that were the most enthusiastic were the craftspeople and artists on the island who saw this project as a way to promote what they did to a wider group of people. We realised that we had built a group of enthusiasts, but not enough people who were ready to invest their time and energy in collaborating with us on this project. We are artists and cultural producers ourselves, and our aim had always been to inject some ideas, enthusiasm and external cultural funding into Suomenlinna and then if the project was running successfully, for us to withdraw and let local people make all the decisions. We felt that for whatever reason we had not hit that point of critical mass where projects gain their own momentum and start to run by themselves.

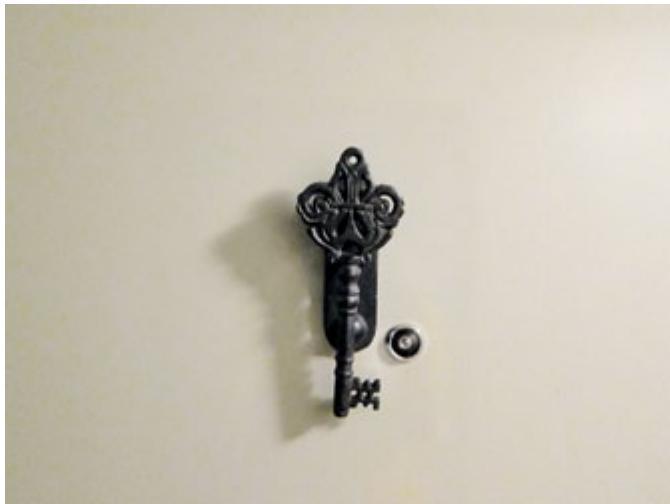
So we have now decided to do something much simpler. We are giving you all the money! The note you have found in this letter was designed by Hilla Mäkelä, a MAA art school student, who is the winner of an illustration competition we setup in April. This note is a beautiful object but has no financial value beyond what you might want to do with it! The note has a link to the [www.viapori.net](http://viapori.net) website which is now a blank

slate. You could use the website to describe what you do, offer some service to other people and even give a discount if someone brings one of these notes. We have put this money through every letterbox on Suomenlinna. You can use the note in any way you like, to put it onto your wall as an artwork, to burn it or as a token for a local time-bank. It's totally up to you :)

From our side, we would just like to hear what you think about the project. What did we do right and what did we do wrong? Did we step on somebody's toes without realising? We are planning to document the process of this project in the form of a free publication which we will launch this autumn, so please give us your thoughts. We would love to hear from you directly! Call Nathalie 050.XXX.XXX and have a chat with her. Or you can fill out an anonymous survey here: <http://softhook.wufoo.eu/forms/suomenlinna-currency>

We hope you like the Kuula and that it will provoke some interesting encounters. Thank you and Long life to the Kuula & Suomenlinna!

Christian & Nathalie, Suomenlinna Money Lab



11 Oct 2012

What did we do wrong?

Christian We set up a website where people who had received the love letter could go and comment on the project. There were three elements to the website, the first was a public bulletin board that allowed people to post offers, requests or public comments about the project. The second was an anonymous online questionnaire that asked people to give us their honest feedback on the project. The language we used in the questionnaire was very direct and asked where we had gone wrong in setting up the project. The final part of the website included a section where people could download the full resolution master images of the Kuula banknote so that they could print their own money. We felt that we had essentially open-sourced the project and

made it available for any purpose outside of our own ideas. We were curious to see if we had been holding the project back and if free availability of the money might stimulate some interesting misuses. The responses were disappointing since we received only two completed questionnaires, which were positive about the project but inconclusive about any of the problems. In addition nobody posted anything in the public forum. In a fitting, but rather tragic end to the project, the forum was overrun by automated spam-bots that had bypassed the security of the website. In the end the spam-bots had become the only users of the forum incessantly posting offers and services for fake products.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Kuula forum. At the top, the word "Kuula" is written in a large, lowercase, sans-serif font. To the right of the title is a small green and red logo resembling a stylized map or leaf. In the top right corner, there are links for "FIN | ENG". Below the title, a sub-header reads: "The forum for the Kuula currency of Suomenlinna. Here you can discuss the project and promote your own local services and goods." A horizontal menu bar follows, containing links for "Home", "About", "Free Money!", "Survey", and "New message". A call-to-action text "Feel free to download the Kuula banknote and print your own!" is centered above a large image of the Kuula banknote. The banknote features a circular emblem with a ship and the text "Suomenlinna · Sveaborg", a value of "1 Kuula", and a map of Suomenlinna. Below this image, text indicates the files are 300dpi PNGs, with a link provided: "Front: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/qc00l3e0fpqf4p/Front300dpi.png>". Further down, another image shows the reverse side of the banknote, featuring a bridge over water and QR codes. Text on the right side of this image includes: "Kuula -seitsi tulee paina ollaan asukkaita ja etuista etäisyydestä Suomenlinnassa. Käte metsätalvella miten ja missä voi käytyä. Kuula-seitsi: www.vaporfin.net". Below this, text states: "These are the master files as 300dpi PNG files: Back <https://www.dropbox.com/s/z480gtp829ex3ut/back300dpi.png>".

Welcome

by CHRISTIAN HOLD 5 months ago

This is a totally open and public website. You can freely post your offers or any thoughts or comments or questions on this website. You can use your real name or just make up a name if you like. The most important thing is that we see if the Kuula can be useful for simulating some local discussions and projects.

All the best
Christian

KGkDsn pnitaprcfeiz, [url=http://qchihsvjwbumm.com/]qchihsvjwbumm[/url], [link=http://eqyrsbrxlekz.com/]eqyrsbrxlekz[/link], http://lctletwqauxz.com/

Reply by PYORVST 4 monthsago

Reply by BASKET NIKE PAS CHER 3 monthsago

Reply by NIKE TN PAS CHER 3 monthsago

Reply by REQUEN TN 3 monthsago

Reply by CASQUETTE NY 3 monthsago

Reply by NIKE AIR MAX 90 PAS CHER 3 monthsago

Reply by TN REQUEN PAS CHER 3 monthsago

Reply by CKGUCC 3 monthsago

Reply by POLO BURBERRY 3 monthsago

Reply by SOYODA 3 monthsago

Reply by BASKET NIKE 3 monthsago

Reply by BASKET NIKE PAS CHER 3 monthsago

Reply by CHLE862 3 monthsago

Reply by NORTH FACE JACKETS CANADA about 1 monthago

When Dave Winer developed SOAP with Don Box and Microsoft engineers,Office 2010 serial key, you and Bill signed on and jumpstarted the Web services revolution. north face paris http://www.northfacevestfr.com/
Reply by NORTH FACE PARIS about 1 monthago

Wow, incredible blog layout! How long have you been blogging for? you made blogging look easy. The overall look of your website is fantastic, as well as the content! [url=http://www.cheapnikelebronshoes.com/tag/air-jordan-8-orange-blazebsneakernews/]air jordan 8 orange blazebsneakernews[/url] air jordan 8 orange blazebsneakernews
Reply by AIR JORDAN 8 ORANGE BLAZEBSNEAKERNEWS about 1 monthago

I like it very much!sd5f46s5df465sd4f Adidas Predator Lethal Zone

Reply by ADIDAS PREDATOR LETHAL ZONE about 1 monthago

Hello first time to come to this forum, I like it very much!sd5f46s5df465sd4f 2013 cheap mercurial vapor 9
Reply by 2013 CHEAP MERCURIAL VAPOR 9 about 1 monthago

Reply by NIKE CLASH COLLECTION about 1 monthago

Reply by NIKE AIR MAX 2010 WOMEN about 1 monthago

Reply by MERCURIAL VAPOR VIII about 1 monthago

Reply by NIKE MERCURIAL NEW about 1 monthago

Reply by MONCLER OUTLET STORE about 1 monthago

I Purchase of high quality wedding, your content, I really like Cheap prom gown

Reply by CHEAP PROM GOWN about 1 monthago

Reply by CANADA GOOSE SOLARIS PARKA about 1 monthago

7 Dec 2012

The Finnish mint release their own Suomenlinna coin

Christian In a last twist on the project the Finnish mint released their own commemorative Suomenlinna coin. The coin features a sailing boat in front of the lighthouse accompanied by three birds. This coin is meant to be for money collectors and not for any exchange—certainly not for use as a local currency. In fact the way the coin is encased in a thick layer of plastic packaging with other coins suggests that it is meant to be left permanently inside its protective display case and never even handled. Was this coin a direct response to our project or just an ironic coincidence?

15 Aug 2013

Last meeting with Teppo

Christian In August 2013, Nathalie, Susanne and I met again on Suomenlinna for a final meeting to finish writing this book. We invited Teppo over for a chat with tea and cake. He was still really enthusiastic about the local currency idea and told us about his current creative projects. He gave us all a beautiful Exchangibition banknote by Dadara, an artist based in Amsterdam. The Exchangibition Bank uses a very apt quote from Oscar Wilde: “When bankers get together for dinner, they discuss art. When artists get together for dinner, they discuss money.”



Commemorative Suomenlinna Coin surrounded by Finnish euro coins

What did we uncover?

With this epilogue we want to draw some tentative conclusions about the project. The reason we initiated this book was to clarify some of our own confusion. We were not really sure what had taken place and why. Over the two and a half year duration of the project we never fully learnt what the majority of the residents on the island thought and felt about the currency. While we had many positive face-to-face discussions with individuals we also heard many rumours and received critical emails from others. We were pretty sure that most people on the island had heard about the project since we had extensive coverage in the local and national newspapers. And yet, whenever we tried to organise a collective meeting, only a few people turned up. What we missed was an opportunity to have

a collective debate about the project. This feeling that it was impossible to start a collective discussion was compounded by the strange events that took place. We had key people like the festival organiser and the money designer, who were initially enthusiastic, suddenly refusing to talk to us. We realised there were rumours being spread behind our backs. We never fully understood the opposition to the project. Were these problems just the result of small misunderstandings that grew and escalated out of control, or a sign of more structural issues? Could we put these events down to 'bad luck'? Perhaps the most productive way to understand what had happened is by focusing on our way of working, as well as on the specific characteristics of Suomenlinna.

Assumptions of artistic production and localness

Today, it is a common global practice for curators and artists to work in places that they are foreign to, even if the projects' focus is on very specific and local situations. By starting the project the way we did, we imagined that we could work with an artist who did not live in Finland and did not speak the local language. Christian had successfully worked in this way before on long-term projects with local organisations in Rennes (France), Hedeby (Denmark) and Amsterdam (Netherlands), so we had high hopes that we would be able to create a participatory project in Helsinki. We had planned for the Pixelache team to act as a producer and local organiser who, in dialogue with Christian, would facilitate the project and play the crucial role of working with a local group of people. Christian's visits were focused times in terms of communication, facilitation and project development. Yet, we were not clear when we started what an enormous amount of work the communication and daily contact with people on Suomenlinna would be. We didn't allocate enough human resources towards a local facilitator that could bring analysis and reactive thinking to the daily running of the project. While the 'remote' way of working with a travelling artist increased flight and accommodation costs and made the project team coordination more difficult, it does not appear that the success or failure of the project was entirely dependent on this model of working. Instead, the lack of resources for local communication and facilitation certainly influenced the dynamics of the project. It was also difficult that Juha left Pixelache during the project and that our local project communicator Suvi became emotionally disconnected from the project. These issues were part of the reason why the project never gained full momentum and stretched over more than two years.

Would the project have 'worked' if it had been started by a well-funded, local group of people from Suomenlinna? We feel the central issue was not funding or remoteness but the local power dynamics on the island that enable or disable projects. We feel that if this project had been set up by someone like Jussi, the festival organiser, with the approval of the Governing Body and Ehrensvärd Society, then a currency could have 'succeeded' even if the qualities of the project would have been different. Yet if this project had been attempted by a less powerful group of locals such as the craftspeople or the art school, then they would have been faced with similar difficulties as our own project. It is worth remembering there were people who we had met on Suomenlinna who had tried to set up similar large-scale collective projects on the island and who had also been frustrated in their attempts. Thus the ability to facilitate a local project depends as much on the local power dynamics as it does on proximity and immersion.

The difficulty of communicating

We started the project by letting the content be defined through discussions with people on the island in order to make room for their imagination. Was this initial openness helpful or counter-productive? It appeared that many people wanted us to define and explain the project in detail. This was difficult because we wanted to develop the project with people in a co-designed way. During autumn 2011, based on enthusiastic discussions and on feedback collected during Väkevä Viapori, we narrowed down the cloud of possibilities to the concept for a local currency. While a large circle within the project team and locals such as Jussi and Teppo were involved in the system design of the currency, we generally felt that it was up to us to specify and clarify the mechanisms of the currency. We worried a lot about how to make the project 'real' for all the people and organisations we wanted to enrol. We felt we had been forced into clarity while being unclear about people's responses to the project. This went against our goal of trying to set up a non-hierarchical project and led to a much more structured project than we had wanted and which may have put some people off. Even worse, the project might have looked like some kind of commercial enterprise that was trying to make money out of local people or the identity of the island.

Rather than setting up formal discussion workshops, it might have been more productive to have one-on-one chats with people. It might have been useful to have simply spent more time in informal spaces on the island such as the local bar to talk with people. Perhaps the formality of our workshop posters reminded people of the institutional mannerisms of the Governing Body. Unfortunately none of the project team lived on the island and Suvi, who had the most time to spend on the project, was more of a communications person than a facilitator. This kind of 'hanging out' and facilitating is quite different from communicating static messages and requires a specific set of skills. We tried to find someone on the island who we could pay to facilitate informal events but this never got very far. The people who we met on the island and who were enthusiastic about the project felt they were themselves outsiders, who did not have the local credibility or time to organise such a process. It is hard to say if the presence of a facilitator on the island over a sustained period would have changed the course of the project.

Another issue was the way we did not manage to communicate the personal benefits of the project to shopkeepers. We did not communicate clearly enough the increased number of tourists who would come to each shop. In particular it would have attracted people who actually wanted to spend money at that specific shop to buy the goods they had read about on the free map. Instead, we placed too much emphasis on how the local currency could be used by local people, rather than the clever way in which the currency would have acted as a kind of 'tourist tax'. In particular the issue of shopkeepers offering 'discounts' was problematic, since we did not explain it very

well which resulted in the project sounding like a loss of income rather than a clear gain. These kinds of issues needed to be explored in more detail through role plays and brainstorms with shopkeepers but they would have required more discussions and meetings.

The notion of the collective

When we started this project we focused on the notion of identifying a collective of people to work with and create a project with. What we want to analyse in this section is where our ideas of participation and collectives came from. Perhaps a basic way to sum up the project is that on Suomenlinna we never found a collective. Perhaps, though, this was not due to the fact that such a collective didn't exist, but was more to do with the fact that we could not identify this collective and learn how to engage with it. When we started, the project team came together around an unspoken idea of participation taken from contemporary art. This often focuses on the notion of a group of people who are bonded by a localised identity and developing methods and tools with them for dialogue and participation assumes that it is possible to enter into surprising dialogue through creative methods and tools. Where did this idea of participation come from?

It is worth crudely sketching two different framings of participatory art. One starts with Dada and Fluxus and the concept of setting up disruptive situations where the norms of society are disrupted and new realities acted out within the confines of a performative space. Key to this idea is the concept of collective moments where rules of association can be disrupted to look for new ways of participating in collective co-creation with no identifiable artistic author. Later these types of ideas were developed by the Situationists into a concept of using disruptive interventions as points of repositioning to create new kinds of politics of association. In a sense then, this kind of history of participation in art could be seen as a specific attempt to create new political collectives outside of institutionalised discourses of representational politics.

In contrast, a neoliberal model of participation arose where the artist acted as an extension of the state and became a mediator of its relationship with the public. This model was particularly prevalent in the late 1990s in the UK, where it shaped cultural policy with its explicit goal of reaching large numbers of 'hard to reach' or otherwise disaffected publics. In this framing the art professionals' role is to prove that they are including the targeted publics in democratic society through artworks that aestheticise the display of people as collectives.

In today's participatory art both of these rhetorics of the artist as initiator of revolutionary collectives as well as tool of the state, coexist and form the discourse of participatory art. The point of this digression is to ask, to what extent these notions of participation shaped this project. In the early stages when the project team was forming and we discussed the conditions for setting up a participatory project, we did not speak

explicitly about any criteria of success. We felt that we shared an unspoken understanding of what we meant by participation. At the beginning this meant trying to set up a collaboration with a local collective. Yet when it became clear that we would not be able to set up a structured collaboration with a specific group, we never discussed the idea of abandoning the project. This was mainly due to the fact that we shifted to trying to build a new collective from scratch—a kind of material participation through the devices and situations of the project. In a sense the main thing we inherited from the history of participatory art was a belief in the notion and power of the collective.

When we approached Suomenlinna, we envisaged that we would find a local collective there, literally a group of people that we could sit down with and start talking. We imagined our task was going to be facilitating meetings with this collective and then brainstorming and collaboratively developing a project with them. Unfortunately, we never encountered this mythical collective but rather a series of shifting networks of entities and power structures. We were not prepared for the complicated entanglements in the history and material of the island and the fluidly changing opinions of people. Our approach focused on trying to talk to the 800 locals and reach a 'critical mass', but we never fully valued our encounters with the material island, tourists or other entities and the extend to which they also form a 'critical mass'.

We should have placed more trust in our own sensations and observations of the peculiarities of the island, such as the importance of the ferry as a hub, the difficult local food situation, as well as the support we received from entities such as the local prison and the arts organisations. If we had adapted more quickly to the complicated mix of human and non-human collectives that exist on the island we might have staged a provocative action in order to trigger reactions, rather than continuing to talk. If we could set up the project again, we would not organise so many discussion workshops but focus more on tangible approaches to the food issues on the island. We could have created a not-for-profit company to support the local food production and promote and distribute their food on the island and beyond.

It is here that the notion of the collective from participatory art caused us problems. What both of the framings of participatory art share is a blinkered focus on collectives of humans, rather than an awareness of the way people are entangled in networks of materiality and ideas. This is especially the case for alternative money projects that need to go beyond liberal concepts of human relationships and work with an extended set of entities. Money is fundamentally not just a human issue, but one that deals with the complex dynamics of the environment as resource and agent. While our way of working was nothing like those models of participation discussed earlier, it still retained a humanist kernel of an unproblematic collective. If we as a project team had managed to adapt to the island dynamics more quickly, we might have been able to get closer to an ecological economy for Suomenlinna.

Emotions as agent and evidence

We started working on Suomenlinna because it is a unique place with a complex history but also because walking across the island, one can feel an intense atmosphere that is not easy to describe. During the process, we found it hard to gather ‘concrete’ facts about the island. Both the project and island seemed to be slippery and elusive. What we managed to gather, were our own experiences and observations of the island as well as encounters with people as stories, rumours and ideas in the form of sensation and emotions. We encountered the island dynamics as subtext—sideways glances, pauses and unsaid things, a kind of body language of Suomenlinna. Our own and other people’s emotions became the main evidence of what we were witnessing on the island.

These emotions told us about dynamics between people who we never met and who were hidden to us, but whose ideas and feelings we witnessed when they were projected onto others. These feelings were our own as well as those of others who were affected by the project. What emerged was how powerful these sensations were in shaping the project in terms of content and also the daily processes of the project. The intense feelings of one of our team members who felt traumatised by the negative reactions she experienced, led directly to the eventual abandonment of the project. Throughout the process, her experiences were often vividly communicated to the rest of the team and coloured our perception of the island and the project.

What emerges from this project is the tangible power of slippery emotions and sensations. Writing this book has been a way of building a collective repository of our personal experiences. Seen in this structured and externalised way, they become a way for us to have an overview and to narrate the process of the project. The book became a way for us to ‘trust’ our sensations and see them as meaningful evidence. We would like to propose that this way of assembling a collective post-hoc reflection is a valuable method for documenting the complexity and ambiguity of participatory processes. Despite the apparent failure of this project or perhaps because of it, we offer this book as a kind of model for mapping the experiential dynamics of participation.

Islands as static projections

There is a strong appeal to conducting a socio-economic and artistic experiment on an island. The apparent self-containment provides a clearly delineated place to experiment. A kind of petri dish where all the rules can be controlled. By setting up the project on the island we had obviously bought into this idea. In fact this fantasy of isolation is also shared by many of the residents who want to get away from the busyness of Helsinki, as well as by the Governing Body who want to maintain a static historical time capsule. Of course Suomenlinna is not an island utopia or a historical capsule. The island exists as

a nonhuman entity of tidal ebb and flow, as well as the daily commute on the ferry of residents who work in the capital, families who come to visit the prisoners, as well as tourists and the flow of basic goods. Suomenlinna is not self-sufficient in terms of food or jobs. Yet this vision of dynamic flows is not shared by many and does not sit well with the island’s static identity.

While we were first attracted to Suomenlinna because of its island context, the project actually emphasises the dynamic flux of the island. By proposing to combine the influx of tourists with the apparently static local community, we conflated two identities that try to stay separate. In this sense we were quite brash in proposing to develop a project based on these unique characteristics of island flow.

Yet over the duration of the project, we have seen changes taking place on the island that support this proposal for a living dynamic island with mutually beneficial relationships between the tourists and locals. A new supermarket has opened near the ferry terminal, which now offers a wider selection of food for residents but does not spoil the image of the historic island. We have also noticed that there is a brand new tourist brochure full of images and text about the craftspeople who work and sell their products on the island. The craftspeople had never been featured like this before. Yet to what extent this was a direct result of our project is unclear.

Time is an important factor for these types of projects, which need to emerge at the right moment. Ideas don’t gain momentum just because they are good in themselves. As the book shows, we had some very inspiring and constructive encounters with an amazingly diverse range of people. We managed to construct a unique and detailed model for a currency specific to Suomenlinna. The collection of people who were stimulated by these ideas was perhaps the best outcome of the project. Perhaps in the future, a collective from the island will be able to bypass the local power hierarchies and set up a project that creates a more equitable and dynamic relationship between the tourists, locals and the history of the island.

The island as an enrolled collective

Suomenlinna is a range of apparently contradictory things. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is the main tourist attraction in Finland as well as the location of starvation camps in the early twentieth century, a contemporary open prison and a place where 800 people live. Here, retired navy officers live next to craftspeople and artists. Yet all these realities coexist on the island without any open conflict.

While the residents are aware of these tensions, they seem to manage by living in their own bubbles without building any central island ‘community’. While the island looks like a solid fortress sitting in the sea, it actually functions like a collection of atomised individuals that acknowledge rather than openly accept, reject or engage with each other. Returning to

actor-network theory, perhaps it would be more accurate to see local residents not as atomised but rather as enrolled by the island itself. Rather than imagining them as disconnected and without participation, another way to see this is that they are heavily enrolled and participating with the island. Suomenlinna is a massive physical bulk as well as a historical construct that is the main actor shaping the lives of all the entities on the island.

The history and identity of the island are so powerful that there is no incentive to build new human-to-human links that might transform the situation on the island. The enrolment of the island proved stronger than the alternative relationship flows that we proposed with this project. In this sense we have to think about the island's Governing Body as a physical and cultural protector of the island, that tries to maintain people's enrolment into a particular historical-spatial network. The history of Suomenlinna is both the physical fact of cannons and rocks as well as a national symbol that requires both physical and symbolic preservation. This position of Suomenlinna as material culture leads to surreal acts like removing the historically inappropriate plants from the island. If we apply this perspective, it allows us to understand the Governing Body's reaction towards this project as the identification of a competitor. What was at stake was people's enrolment in the historic identity of Suomenlinna. If Suomenlinna were to become more alive and diverse, then the Governing Body's role as the spokesperson for the island would be threatened.

Participation, money and legitimacy

We initiated this project from the point of wanting to create participation. In the process of identifying Suomenlinna as the site and a local currency as the concept, we noticed the ways the content and method we were using and proposing were starting to intertwine. The practical process of meeting people to discuss the idea, build trust and invite them to join became very similar to the issues of trust and legitimacy we were exploring with the money system. Both processes raise the issue of who gets to participate, how they become legitimate and who has the power to implement and control them. Systems become 'legitimate' through popular participation. All currencies require a kind of participation from their users, a kind of mutual recognition based on trust. People need to believe that when they work for a whole month and receive abstract numbers on a screen or symbolic money tokens, that they can then later convert these things into useful items such as food. This kind of basic trust is enforced by governments using the force of law and the threat of violence. In a sense this legitimacy is ensured through a process of coercive participation that is entirely one way and requires the users to participate in the currency system with no space for renegotiation. In a similar way one can see many participatory art projects as one-way processes focused on the utilitarian goal of trying to legitimate a democratic system based on 'inclusion' rather than truly acting for the benefit of participants.

In a sense then, any 'alternative' project, whether a currency or an art project, is fundamentally a renegotiation of what it means to participate. As this project literally tried to intertwine these two notions, the complexities and issues that emerged reflect equally on both of these domains. The issues we encountered in gathering a collective for an alternative art project are the same problems as gathering legitimacy for an alternative currency system.

It was in the process of enrolment, which aimed at building a collective, that issues of legitimacy and power relationships emerged. In particular the Governing Body challenged us on whether we had enough participants to make a legitimate project on the island, by contrasting their level of enrolment with ours. If everybody stopped using the euro tomorrow, then the currency would lose its legitimacy and economic value. Conversely, if tomorrow everybody started using a new exchange token then these tokens would gather legitimacy and value. In a sense we can think of money as a projection of the collective through which it gains its legitimacy. This reshapes the issue of money as one of representation. It is by paying attention to these processes of building and maintaining these projections of the collective that we can see how the legitimacy of institutions such as the Governing Body and national governments is maintained. What we have learnt from this project is the complexity and difficulty of trying to build a new projection of the local collective, while seeing how it conflicts with other projections that already exists in that place. As Juha, programme director of Pixelache, said about the project, "it's like trying to start a project in Kiasma without their permission. Suomenlinna is a museum." He suggested that we were doing the equivalent of setting up a counter cultural project inside a famous art museum without getting their permission. In this sense we shouldn't be surprised by the kind of difficulties we faced.

In fact the most important conclusion to draw from this project is that the world is never a flat featureless terrain but full of the existing topography of enrolled publics, histories and material nonhuman processes. Any project that is successful in starting to renegotiate processes of legitimacy should expect some challenge and hostility. It is only by adopting criteria that understand this kind of challenge as a symptom of a successful project that we will be able to move forward and create alternative networks that establish new kinds of legitimacy.

Essays

This section consists of a series of commissioned and selected essays that address participation and collectivity in order to reflect on the wider context of the Suomenlinna project. The texts locate the project in a variety of discourses which range from the applied and engaged to the utopian and theoretical.

How do we participate in money systems? Can we build new collectives based on material forms of participation? What are the challenges for alternative money systems? Can we inscribe alternative values into them?

The curiosity of creating money

Pekko Koskinen / Reality Research Center / todellisuus.fi/en

What if we viewed money primarily as a creative medium, similar to the way we perceive a canvas or a book? What features would be inherent to this medium, forming the common characteristics of the works within it?

Some of these features are outlined in this text, with observations on their influence on money. Of course, a comprehensive analysis of this medium would present a lifetime's work—an impractical undertaking in the current circumstances. But given the constant presence of money in our private and social lives, it is both an opportune and a relevant area for creative interpretation. And even if mapping the whole medium is out of the question, working out starting points for an exploration should still be worthwhile.

To accomplish this, this text presents a series of three perspectives on money. These perspectives can be seen as portholes from which to catch glimpses of money's characteristic features. Taken together, they offer the possibility to contemplate the common elements of money, elements that are likely to be present when it is used as a creative medium.

If these perspectives bring out the features of money as a creative medium, what could be done with these features? To sketch out potential directions for experimental money, possible paths of development will be pointed out and presented through thematic questions. The final part of the text offers a playful system of currency: playing with it presents an alternative manner of processing the topic.

As a whole, these different approaches seek to treat money as any other medium would be treated, with disregard for its stature and the narrow conceptions of its formal range. A similar attitude is also encouraged for you, dear reader. If you can approach money like a cat approaches a ball of thread—with a combination of interest and an utter lack of respect—I have achieved at least one of my aims with this text. Where such an attitude will lead, I cannot say. That is ultimately up to you.

With that in mind, onto the perspectives...

The perspective of systems

Among the notable features of money as a medium is the essential role of its system. While we might recognise money by its external signs, such as notes or coins, they form mostly an interface with the system itself. Without the system behind these signs, the operation of money would be utterly inconceivable.

To illustrate such a relationship between a system and its signs, it is useful to compare money to other system-based designs, such as chess, for example.

The meaning of a chess piece—the queen being generally powerful, or a pawn being pivotal in certain situations—is not derived from the piece itself. Rather, it is derived from the system of chess, which reveals meaning through the pieces. That is, the system functions as the source from which meaning issues, while the pieces function as coordinates for interpretation, representing its configurations. As another reflection of this relationship, transferring a particular game of chess from a physical board onto a computer screen is quite possible, even common. The only requisite is that the pieces are placed in the same positions, to reflect the state of the system.

The interpretation of money follows a similar relationship: following hyperinflation, the sense of a particular banknote is drastically changed. The physical banknote remains identical, but its position in the system is altered. As with chess, the system functions as the basis and the representation serves the system. And as with chess pieces, banknotes can be replaced by numbers on a screen without any change in their value.

The creation of such a system is like creating an entity with a will of its own. In the case of money, the system forms the mind of that entity; the exchanges are acts guided by that mind, reflecting its different states of being. The system is the basis of money's autonomy: the way it functions when it is let loose on the world to find its own manner of existence and development.

From this perspective, money offers us a social system of exchanges. Approached as a medium, it presents us with the challenge of creating something that becomes independent of us, developing its own behaviour—an entity that will find its own life in the fabric of society.

The perspective of values

The relationship between value and money is particularly complex. To reflect upon it, we shall take a detour through the development of money during the last few decades. While this detour might seem like a diversion from the topic itself, it serves to illustrate how changes in the system of money affect its sense of value. It also reflects on the relationship between monetary value and other values upheld by our society, which is an issue that should not be overlooked from this perspective.

Throughout most of its history, money has been heavily dependent on concrete exchanges, from physical tokens to actual items that can be bought and sold with it. However, through the emergence of computers and digital networks, our ability to represent abstract systems has expanded considerably. This expansion has been transformative for the medium of money. Its existence as digitally registered bits, as electronic currencies within networks, has allowed it to escape from its reliance on physical tokens. As a consequence, money is moving towards ever-faster exchanges of monetary value, and becoming more abstract to enable these exchanges.

This development can of course be considered a question of efficiency. As noted by our first perspective, the external tokens form an interface to the system of money. When it comes to interfaces, the fast and flexible options tend to replace the slow and cumbersome. Certainly, a digital interface for money is more efficient than notes and coins.

But there is more at play here. As a consequence of digital networks, the balance of the system itself has altered. For example, when an exchange of money over vast distances takes not days, but fractions of a second, operations that used to be impractical can become extremely valuable. As such new possibilities accumulate, the way the system functions is altered. What is in play here is not a change in values, but a change in the system itself, in the manner the system values itself.

This altered balance means the money we use today is decisively different from pre-digital-network money, despite

sharing similar principles. To concretise this difference with an example, imagine executing the operations of a computer using pencil and paper. This is certainly doable, but such operations would be unusable—the principles are the same, but using different means to accomplish them completely alters the potential usefulness of these operations.

This example highlights how the means of exchange, and the technology they rely upon, are an inextricable part of the system of money: if the means change, the value of operations changes as well.

And the means keep changing. The continuing development of digital networks pushes money onwards on its journey of self-discovery, its system reacting to the technology that has become an integral part of its inner workings. We, being mere humans, are mostly unable to interpret its future, the twists and turns implied by its development. We are taken along for the ride. And since there is no one directly at the helm, just competing factions with varying degrees of influence, there is currently no entity that could effectively control this journey of ours.

Yet even when money escapes our comprehension, it simultaneously affects us on a very personal level. Every system we implement in society gains social agency, becoming both an instrument utilised by society, and a social entity seeming to have a will of its own. The rules we create guide our behaviour within those rules. The system's values become the basis for our values: they form a framework for our choices and preferences, coordinating our decisions. Despite its abstractness, money is also extremely concrete, a constant participant in our daily lives.

This complex situation highlights the pervasive nature of money in our highly systematised society. Money affects us on all levels, whether individual, social or societal. If we analyse our everyday actions, we find money influencing our decisions. Every governmental act harbours numerous traces of money, guiding its outcome. Money's increasing flexibility offers it more avenues to affect our values in a general sense, expanding beyond the traditional meaning of monetary value.

But this situation also brings out the unique qualities of money as a medium. Its system is ultimately a result of our social design. We have created it, yet we must now submit to the values it generates. Another kind of money would instil in us another system of values, and thus comprehensively affect the values that define our lives.

From this perspective, money offers itself as a medium of value creation—not just in terms of exchange, but also in terms of designing values themselves. Whatever money makes valuable will gain meaning for the whole economy of life, affecting the definition of what is worthwhile and what is not.

The perspective of thoughts

Since money functions as social agency, it forms an integral part of our personal reality. The social presence of money accumulates via our private moments whenever we consider the possibility of using money. This systematic presence forms the opening through which money enters our reality and makes itself part of us.

In other words, to be realised on a social level, the use of money has to first exist as a personal system of thought. Money is distributed through our lives as moments of consideration—these moments make money operable. Even the most casual monetary considerations are based on our systematic sense of how money functions.

Take the simple situation where you observe an object on sale, thinking: ‘I could buy that.’ Even in its simplicity, this act requires a union of several interpretations:

- A realisation that the potential for an exchange is present, and the systematic understanding this entails.
- A conception of the contours of that exchange: What would be exchanged?
- A comprehension of the choreography of exchange: How would it take place, and what actions would be necessary for it to occur?
- An awareness of one’s own status within the system—knowing that the necessary amount is available to oneself, in some specific format.

Missing just one of these elements would make it impossible to conceive of even the most basic act of payment. Between such moments, money forms a process, relating such moments of consideration to each other, thus coalescing into a system.

In short: to use money, we must integrate it into ourselves—make it a part of us, part of our thoughts and actions.

From this perspective, money offers us a medium for designing systems of thought. It directs our concerns, presenting a model of interpretation that allocates not only values but also their connections, enabling us to think in terms of money.

Sketching out directions

Traditionally, money has had an assigned function within our society, serving as an instrument for the transfer of items and services. But the developments over the last decades, summarised above, have made it clear that this perspective is too limited and that money is already operating outside of our expectations.

Given the situation, it is reasonable to argue that a comprehensive re-evaluation of money is necessary—we need to do more than just refine and polish our approach. Both the system and role of money will have to be reassessed. In the interest of surveying new ranges of monetary systems, our conception of money should include experimentation across its range of implementations.

To open money to experimentation, we should find new playgrounds for it: areas where implementation allows for more freedom to test different models and functions. Here are two directions that could provide us with such playgrounds, if pursued.

Direction one:

Would it be possible to explore the creation of money without the requirement of wide-ranging social implementation? Could we design money in the form of social games or thought experiments?

Direction two:

Could we establish money as a creative medium by conceiving an ‘artistry’ of money, where money would be regarded with similar freedom as authorship of artworks? What styles of expression could be formed around creating systems of money?

The suggestion of ‘artistry’ is not intended to embrace the institutionality of artworks, or the potential limitations the tradition of art could inscribe. Rather, such an ‘artistry’ of money could provide a way to question those limitations.

So far, the canon of art has shown a curious resistance to the idea of system as medium. It is notable that games, which are first and foremost systems, have been long regarded as outside the tradition of art. Perhaps this division suggests a deeply embedded cultural resistance to giving systems the same role as objects or events, which are the primary forms that have been historically perceived as artworks. In opposition to this division, the system-based medium of money could provide a challenge to art’s prevailing practices and instigate new approaches to artistic creation.

While the reassessment of the role of money can be seen as a societal necessity, we can also approach it as a creative opportunity. Implementing different systems of exchange, creating new systems of value, designing systems of money in the interest of developing novel thought processes—all of these possibilities present promising avenues for creation, harboured by the medium of money. They should result in radically different conceptions of monetary forms, serving to reflect upon their role in our lives.

The (almost) free sample: the currency of reading

In parting, a final method for contemplating money is presented below. It represents a shift from reading to play, instructing in the usage of a playable currency. This currency can also be used separately from the complete text, as an individual work. Its exchanges take place within the process of reading itself and it is usable with any text—this text included. As a side benefit, it also provides a modest example of the two directions of development outlined above.

Instructions:

As you read, estimate the passages in terms of their value to you. Whenever you feel that you have gained something noteworthy from the reading, consider yourself indebted. To pay what you owe, select another passage that seems interesting while you are reading it, but which doesn't leave you with anything notable, and spend a minute re-reading and reconsidering it.

If you have gained something particularly noteworthy from a passage of text—something that you would deem to be more valuable than your average minute—spend additional time to rephrase what you found notable in it, and write it in your own words on a piece of paper. This paper will serve as your ‘Proof of Payment’, which you can store as a receipt of your exchange.

To use this currency with other people, you can pass on this ‘Proof of Payment’ as a ‘Proof of Debt’. If you give it to someone else, and they accept it, they owe you at least a minute of reading and contemplation of the text you have written, either on that paper or somewhere else.

Note that within this system of money, simply exchanging two ‘Proofs of Payment’ is not allowed. Such a practice could de-emphasise the content of such exchanges, quickly surpassing the contemplative reading, and become a manner of exchange for its own sake.

Finally, as noted by the subtitle above, this currency is almost free. The only payment required is that you contemplate the relationship between this currency and its more traditional counterparts. This contemplation does not need to last more than a moment. Perhaps you already paid your debt while reading the sentence above. But you can always pay more.

Taking stock – alternative economies, local and beyond

Antti Jauhiainen / Parecon Finland / osallisuustalous.fi

The following text examines the wider view of the varied inspiring, imaginative and, yes, often difficult currency experiments in today's economy and their laudable contributions to lasting social change. There are multiple issues with creating new, stronger and longer lasting experiments in equitable cooperation for a freer society. I will attempt to go through some of them, focussing particularly on the challenges facing local currency experiments and their long-term prospects. But before we begin, I would like to make a few encouraging remarks that would be good to keep in mind while we look at the challenges of these experiments today.

The culture of capitalism is arguably quite firmly rooted in people's thinking. This is probably even more true for the regions often called advanced economies, such as Europe and the United States. The idea that institutions should be based on the principle of hierarchy and inequality is very much taken as a given in most situations. The belief that these institutional arrangements, even though often unwanted or seen as even downright repressive, are necessary—'a fact of life, get over it—is strong, not only among those benefitting from this principle, but also in the population at large, amongst employees, students and even people living in extremely precarious conditions. When asked, many believe that the only way to run an efficient and working economy is through hierarchy and competition, and while another way would be nice, it just wouldn't work.

This may seem disheartening, but there is a definite upside to it that anyone working for a freer, more inspiring society knows: even though people are definitely firm believers in the omnipotence and everlastingness of greed and competition, they somehow still act in completely opposite ways far too often to deem these capabilities completely foreign to us humans. In fact, anthropological evidence overwhelmingly

suggests that it is precisely our capability to engage in cooperation and our amazing proclivity for empathising with and helping others that has propelled human societies forward. Naysayers often dismiss these as 'anomalies' or 'isolated incidents', but even in a society as punctured through by the logic of competition and greed as ours, people push ever more fervently towards real ways to base community life on mutual trust and support.

It is my belief, therefore, that the inherent appeal of alternative economy experiments, in tapping into innate capabilities that we employ despite the 'cost' to us in the current economic climate, should always be taken into account. Which is not to say that traits such as cruelty, greed and selfishness aren't innate in humans—they definitely are. Our current economy has an overt focus on, and preference for, some of these selfish traits, but an alternative economy, one that puts value on the positive, communal and forward-thinking goals described above, could very well provide us with greater possibilities for human ingenuity, freedom and success impossible in today's economy.

Some notes on participatory economy

I work at Parecon Finland, an organisation that focuses on ideas for a more democratic and sustainable economy. Working with a wide range of partners, we organise events, publish materials and try to provide a useful, coherent analysis of some of the key problems inherent in market-based, capitalist institutions. We provide a platform for various alternative visions, as well as coming up with credible and inspiring solutions to these problems.

To pinpoint the problems of capitalist institutions, we use the framework of participatory economy as a comparison. In short, it is an economic model based on a set of values and institutions, aiming to answer all the basic questions any economy needs to answer: how people are remunerated, how production is organised and how products and services are exchanged and developed. We believe it provides a very valuable perspective from which to discuss economic democracy and ecological sustainability.

Participatory economy is a vision that has been widely shared over the past two hundred years, an ideal of people managing their own economic affairs democratically and equitably instead of being driven by greed and fear to compete against one another. It is also a fully formed theoretical economic model that concretely spells out the way fundamental economic decisions could be made in new and different ways. Participatory economy is a proposal for a working ‘complete’ economy in the sense that it provides basic, theoretical answers to questions that all economic models need to address, such as remuneration, property rights, financing of investments and large-scale projects and resource allocation. We believe it to be an excellent starting point for fruitful discussion on what exactly our ideal economy should look like. It is important to point out, however, what the model is not. It is not a ‘silver bullet’ that could be some sort of blueprint for a real economy. It doesn’t rigidly detail how a real participatory economy would work, but provides suggestions and ideas on how it would be possible to organise different aspects of such an economy and argues for the positive impact of those systems. All this is a benefit in our view, as the proposal leaves it open to individual communities, projects and maybe, one day, countries to create the actual framework that would be sustainable in their particular context.

Participatory economy or ‘participatory economics’ should therefore be understood for what it is: an alternative vision that dates back to the birth of capitalism, now backed by a formal model demonstrating that such a vision is feasible, at least in theory. A participatory economy has yet to be put into practice on a large scale, and still has a long way to go before its various problems can be worked out.

In this article, I focus on some examples of alternative solutions with ideas based on the participatory economy as a basis. They may or may not help with some of the problems that I point out in alternative economy experiments. It is worth noting that anybody engaged in actual experiments should and will naturally create their own solutions based first and foremost on their specific experiences. Many of the arguments on local economies I go through in this text are discussed explicitly and in more detail in their historical as well as practical context in the book *Economic Justice & Democracy*, which Parecon Finland was proud to help publish recently in a Finnish edition. In it, author Robin Hahnel, one of the co-creators of the idea of participatory economy, delves with considerable detail into the institutions and

solutions of participatory economy and provides an excellent chapter on reforms and different alternative economy proposals.

How local currencies work (or don't work)

Local currency experiments have a long history, and there are a number of ongoing experiments throughout the world. They all attempt to respond to particular failures of capitalist economies by appending a supplementary currency system.

It is my understanding that in most, if not all, local currency systems a person can hire another person from the community to perform a service and pay them in units of the local currency. In some systems there is no money per se, but simply an account, or ledger, where every ‘exchange’ is recorded as a credit for the person performing the service and a debit for the person receiving it. Managing these accounts and exchanges is increasingly feasible with computers and networked mobile devices.

Other systems use a currency that changes hands when people work for others. Often new members are given some amount of the local currency (or a start-up ‘credit’ if there is no physical currency) so they can hire someone to work for them immediately without having to wait until they have been hired to work for someone else. While most exchanges are of labour services among community members, in some systems local merchants participate by agreeing to accept the local currency as partial payment for goods they sell. This sort of ‘dual economy’ should in most cases be a very practical and smart way to organise local currency experiments.

Another popular alternative local currency is the so-called Time Dollar system. In Helsinki, ‘Stadin Aikapankki’ is a very successful and positive example of such an experiment, and is something anyone interested in alternative economy experiments should take a look at. In the Time Dollar or time banking system, labour is exchanged on an hour-for-hour basis. Exchange rates may vary. Some work is valued more highly, some less, so some kinds of labour can be exchanged for more local currency than other kinds of labour. In all non-Time Dollar systems, individual buyers and sellers negotiate how much of the local currency will be paid for an hour of work. In some of these systems, however, there are big differences in what a particular kind of labour is worth in various exchanges, while in others a uniform pay rate for each category of labour evolves depending on supply and demand.

Obviously these experiments exist in parallel to the prevailing capitalist trading and banking. It is important to understand the profound friction between the current economy and these experiments.

There are a lot of valid criticisms to be made of the capitalist monetary system and financial markets, which are admirably reflected in local currency projects. Local regions often remain in recession even when the national economy picks up, and very often national and global financial markets siphon savings out of poor communities to invest elsewhere.

In these situations, productive people in the community who cannot find gainful employment, and local businesses that suffer from a lack of customers can make an obvious deal: hire me, so I can afford to buy from you. Buy from me, so I can afford to hire you. The problem is that the capitalist economy does not facilitate these deals. Lacking buyers, local businesses are in no position to hire, and lacking jobs, unemployed locals are in no position to buy from local merchants. Alternative currency systems attempt to redress this failure by creating an alternative system of exchange to ‘jump-start’ mutually beneficial deals that would be impossible in the capitalist economy. Unfortunately, local currencies are unlikely to have more than a marginal impact on local employment, while reform policies can be more effective.

This is where government can actually be a useful catalyst, something that the Nordic welfare states have so successfully applied in the past. The government buys goods from businesses, which then employ the unemployed. Or the government provides more credit or reduces taxes so people will buy more, and thereby relieve the paralysis. Moreover, all these policies can be applied locally in regions where unemployment remains even as it subsides nationally. It is therefore crucial to advance such policies and tie local currency experiments to them in useful ways.

Unfortunately, local currencies cannot have an effect on the flow of financial capital into and out of communities as long as capitalist banks and financial institutions operate in their current form. A bank opens branches in a poor community, accepts deposits from local residents, and then makes loans to businesses outside the village, state, or country—leaving the poor community bereft of the financial capital it needs to facilitate its own economic development. Local currency systems cannot serve as a counter-mechanism to capital flight, helping to prevent this process. Until capitalist banks and financial markets cease to operate inside communities, or at the very least are regulated by much tighter rules than is the case today, the only effective way to tackle capital flight is through campaigns against redlining, pressure on banks for community reinvestment requirements, and the organisation of community development initiatives to bring capital into poor areas.

Another market failure that local currencies respond to is the problem of labour exchanges in capitalist markets. When people exchange labour services with one another, the terms of the trades can be fair—or they can be unfair. Participatory economy is based on an idea of economic justice that implies that exchanges of labour will be fair when they represent exchanges of equal sacrifice. If all work were equally (un)

desirable, then trading an hour of one kind of labour for an hour of another kind of labour would be fair. But there are important exceptions when someone’s work is more dangerous or takes a greater toll than someone else’s empowering and pleasant work, and this should be accounted for with fairness.

Of course, this is generally not how things work in capitalist exchanges. In capitalism goods are generally exchanged in ratios that represent unfair exchanges of labour. The extent to which alternative currency systems rectify this failure of capitalism varies from system to system. To the extent that different kinds of labour are equally (un)pleasant, time banking exchanges are equitable. And even when different kinds of labour are not equally (un)pleasant, time banking exchanges are likely to be fairer than exchanges in the capitalist economy. To the extent that individuals from the same community treat each other with fairness when agreeing on the terms of payment face-to-face, other local currency systems can also improve on capitalist exchanges.

However, to the extent that the laws of supply and demand determine the rates of pay for different kinds of labour services in local currency systems, these alternative systems of labour exchange simply mirror the terms of exchange in the capitalist economy at large. We should not be naive regarding these exchanges, and we should be able to see the problems in allowing the laws of supply and demand to determine how many hours of carpentry, for example, can be exchanged for an hour of dentistry. Local currency experiments should not replicate the problems of capitalist labour markets in this regard. Collective bargaining, wage solidarity campaigns and the widening of local common infrastructure and thus the freely available commons are important tactics to counter these problems, as local currencies alone are very vulnerable to falling victim to them.

Conclusion

Local currency systems are useful to the extent that they reduce local unemployment, reward people for their labour more fairly than capitalist labour markets, and help people understand that they can—and should—manage their own division of labour equitably. People participating in them should actively look for trading strategies and labour remuneration that is more just and participatory than the supply and demand model applied in a capitalist economy.

Local currency experiments provide important openings to an alternative type of economy and can significantly widen the collective imagination of participants. What we can imagine is often limited by the reality we live currently in. Local currency experiments and other projects for alternative economies and lifestyles can very concretely demonstrate to us that everything around us is created by people, and we can re-imagine and reshape much of it. This re-imagining and reshaping of our communities and the world around us is not

easy. It always takes time and proceeds in unpredictable and often frustratingly small steps, but this fundamental process can teach us a lot. Each experiment and its possible failures should encourage new and better experiments, because they are crucially important for gaining real-world experience of the problems we face when integrating such experiments with current capitalist economy.

Local currency experiments should not be viewed in either/or terms; they are neither a magic bullet, nor a waste of time. The experiments provide invaluable insight, but are prone to the dangers of being too optimistic about their prospects for survival in a capitalist economy. Misguided theories about abstract concepts of money can be counter-productive, and activists can become overly enthusiastic about the capabilities of local currency systems, while remaining oblivious to what is beyond their scope.

In addition, I would like to note that financially impoverished people should be given extra attention in local currency experiments, as elementary moral principles of social justice dictate that they should receive more benefits and more opportunities for participation than those who are better off. This strategy supports the sustainability of local currency systems: people who have seen capitalism's failures in their own lives and then see tangible benefits of local currency experiments are more likely to become long-term supporters of these projects. At the same time, it helps to draw more people in, increasing the diversity and the excitement. Taking the fragile status of alternative experiments in an aggressive capitalist economy into account, I believe it is crucial to build networks of mutual support between these experiments, precisely because they require resources and can also be very taxing over time.

In the current situation, a diversified approach to the multitude of problems related to local money systems is needed. Patience and solidarity in the face of adversity and difficulties will be tested, as all entrepreneurs, activists and organisers already know. But the problems and injustices requiring new solutions and campaigns provide encouraging possibilities for inventions, innovations and breakthroughs impossible to achieve with the old paradigms of short-sightedness, competition and greed. Alternative economy cultures and experiments are in a precarious situation, constantly under threat of being washed away or of succumbing to the myriad problems in our current economy. But they also stand on the precipice of success, with a view over an undiscovered country of excitement, possibility and participation that deserves serious thought and action. Rosy metaphors, abstract manifestos, and vague declarations of values will not convince those who have legitimate concerns about how a new economy would ultimately work, nor will they help those who are hardest hit by the failings of capitalist economies and who are in deep need of solidarity and alternatives. This all needs to be taken into account when considering strategies as well as working on the very practical level of currency experiments and alternatives.

Arguably, not all of the beautiful prospects present in the various visions of alternative economy are likely to be realised, but many features of a better economy are definitely achievable. The alternatives represented by local economies based on equitable cooperation are real. But as the problems inherent in basing our economies on blind competition and greed continue to grow—and directly related to this, with the very credible threat of cataclysmic climate change growing—local economies are increasingly important for not only living comfortable, pleasant and worthy lives with focus, purpose and happiness, but for our very survival.

Frontlining currency: 'speculative numismatics' as antagonistic graphic design

Chris Lee / scapegoatjournal.org / unitedunderwear.com

The moment goldsmiths began issuing banknotes, they became history's most powerful graphic designers. This essay¹ is about conflating (de)sign with currency in order to implicate graphic design's political dimension and to call out the critical potential of alternative currencies.

It is difficult to make general claims about what alternative currencies are for and what they are against if, we were to see them as an antagonistic/political phenomenon. However, while efforts around alternative currencies follow a range of motivations from militant regionalism to eco-lifestyle projects, the very gesture of attempting to institute an alternative plays out at least as a direct challenge to the assumed opacity of monetary hegemony. As a graphic designer, I am interested in modelling the possibility of alternative currencies as an antagonistic graphic design practice by observing how power is channelled *through* signs like currency. Avoiding the occasional tendency for discussions around alternative currencies to slide into reactionary discourses like Tea Party-style libertarianism or fully degenerate anti-semitism that one can come across online, I approach the subject via graphic design and consider alternative currencies in light of their critical and transformative capacities. I believe that what the discourse around alternative currency sorely needs is a heavy dose of critical *and* utopian speculation—images, visualisations, performances, sounds, maps, plans and so on, as an ‘investment’ (let’s not be afraid of these words) in what Félix Guattari calls “many alternative set-ups.”² What’s needed at the same time is an intensification of discourse around the dissident *and* transformative potential of graphic design.

This article can also be read as an effort towards bringing numismatics (the study or collection of currency, including coins, tokens, paper money, and related objects)³ outside the realm of peculiar hobby, to propose ‘speculative numismatics’ as a genre of graphic design.⁴ That is, the imagination of other social-political/monetary realities through speculative visualisations—an aesthetic tactic in the struggle against state and capital,⁵ by opening up another *front* along the lines of monetary contestation, a struggle over the space of signs and their legitimisation.

The basic premise here is to consider alternative currency programs as graphic design praxis that ‘frontlines’ or renders the representation of value, as a space of contestation. This is not to inflate the valorisation of graphic design as a professional category, but rather to situate it as an aesthetic praxis engaged in the production and antagonism of signs, under the premise that signs are channels of force that circulate and thereby reify power. One could claim that among other

3 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numismatics> accessed 4 July 2011.

4 I also considered ‘forensic numismatics’ as a marginally less pretentious candidate for the name of this genre. Although I think it would be appropriate for describing a practice that maps the operation of power through currency, it’s rather less suggestive of a transformative capacity, and actually, it already describes an existing practice of grading and authenticating coin collections.

5 Capital and state are two separate things in their modus operandi. Capital belongs to a principle of exchange, while state belongs to the principle of plunder and redistribution. Historically speaking, it was in the stage of the absolutist monarchical state that they were combined. The state necessitated the development of the capitalist economy in order to survive and strengthen itself; while the capitalist economy has had to rely on the state, because it has not been able to affect all productions to make them part of it, and what is more, it continues to be dependent even upon un-capitalized productions such as the reproduction of humans and nature. Thus, after the rise of industrial capitalism and bourgeois revolution of state, they two joined together and came to form an inseparable amalgamation, yet at the same time as sustaining their own autonomies. So it is that we have to consider counter acts against capitalism and state as one and the same movement.” (Karatani, Kojin, *The Principles of the New Associationist Movement* <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0105/msg00099.html> accessed 12 July 2011.)

1 This essay was first published in *The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest*, Issue 8, 2012.

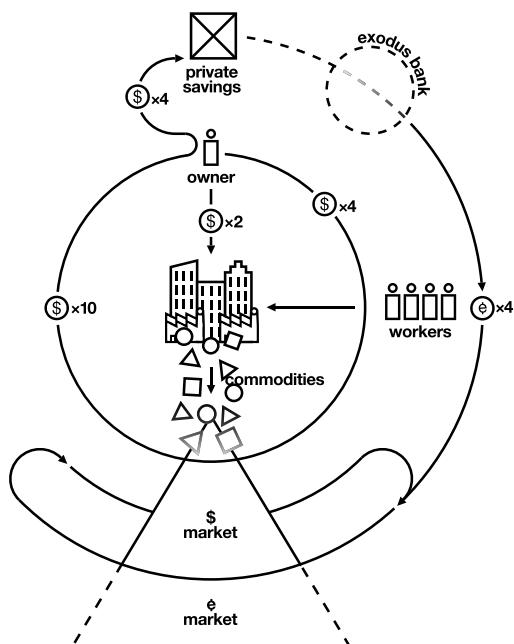
2 “The reversal of modern capitalism involves not only the struggle against material bondage and visible forms of repression, but also, from the outset, the creation of many alternative set-ups.” Guattari, Félix in *Autonomia: Post-political Politics*, semiotext(e), 2007, p. 109.



Exodus trade note

Exchangeable for four euros at the Dutch chain-shop HEMA, within 30 days from the date of 'issue'. This note is backed by a bucket of 100 colour markers. An experiment in temporarily amplifying the circulation of value and considering the operation of legitimacy.

things, graphic design is implicated in processes of naturalisation of discourse through formalising, standardising, institutionalising and legitimising signs, or in other words, making *koine*⁶ the power that backs the meaning of *signs* (which I will henceforth use interchangeably with the term *discursive standards*). What is at stake in the recognition of money as a naturalised discursive standard is the possibility of challenging its naturalised legitimacy through formal/aesthetic praxis.



Value (re)presentation, profit redundancy, wealth redistribution

The 'exodus bank' (re)presents value by estimating the surplus value collected by the owner(s) of a particular workplace (let's say: company 'X'), and counting that amount to the accounts of the workers as 'exodus bucks'. Initially these units may not be spendable anywhere, but with the incubation of a sufficiently complex and diverse productive network of exploited workers who also hold accounts with the 'exodus bank', the 'exodus' currency system may be launched and notes emitted

6 *Koine* comes from Greek for shared, common, ordinary, usual, etc. The word *koine* is not the etymological root of the word coin (as in money), however, the conceptual relevance presents a striking coincidence.

to render redundant the artificially scarce fiat-currency. It would be a currency representing labour rather than capital.

The seemingly inevitable ontology of money has largely remained outside the stage of political contestation, marking an under-explored channel for significant critical and material contributions to struggles for social and economic justice. According to geographer Peter North in his book *Money and Liberation: The Micropolitics of Alternative Currencies*, even Marx glossed over the question of money in *Das Kapital*, considering the commodity money of his time (gold), to be the ultimate form on which to hinge his analysis.⁷ However, doing so largely neglected the possibility of imagining and struggling for other monetary realities and their attendant political-economic configurations.

"When we are talking 'de signum', about signs, we have to point out that signs are born out of conflict."

– Société Réaliste, in the exhibition guide for *Pre-specifics: Access X!*

Thus, to create new signs and spawn new social realities, a site of conflict needs to be located. I believe here we have to start with the question of legitimacy: what is it that makes the dollar function as money, but not the I.O.U. I tried to use at the supermarket? It doesn't take much reasoning to conclude that if I were sufficiently threatening, the supermarket could agree that my I.O.U. is legitimate. Most people who are sufficiently threatened will accept *any* ridiculous claim as reality. The dollar's legitimacy, for example, is guaranteed primarily because at one moment or another, it is the sign that the state (with its monopoly on coercion and subsequent capacity to define reality) demands through taxation as a reification of its hegemony. It is thus incumbent on all economic actors under the domain and protection of the state, to adopt the logic of the state, and subsequently demand whatever *it* demands in taxes. In essence, taxation not only sustains the sovereign, but insists that we all become little kings and queens ourselves. While the state establishes itself through the enclosure of the commons and creating an interdependency on the basis of the subject's insecurity, the subject establishes her 'sovereignty' by limiting the exchange of her social capacities, i.e. labour power. Sometimes this labour power becomes very cheap, or basically worthless by being very common, forcing some people to establish their 'sovereignty' the way it was originally done. I am not suggesting however that 'sovereignty', state or other, can stamp out the deficiencies of markets. In an article for *Mute Magazine*, and much more substantially in his recently released book, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, anthropologist David Graeber debunks the myth (among others) of the diametrical opposition between states and markets and argues that in fact, they are two sides of the same coin.

7 North, Peter, *Money and Liberation: The Micropolitics of Alternative Currency Movements*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2007, p. 9.

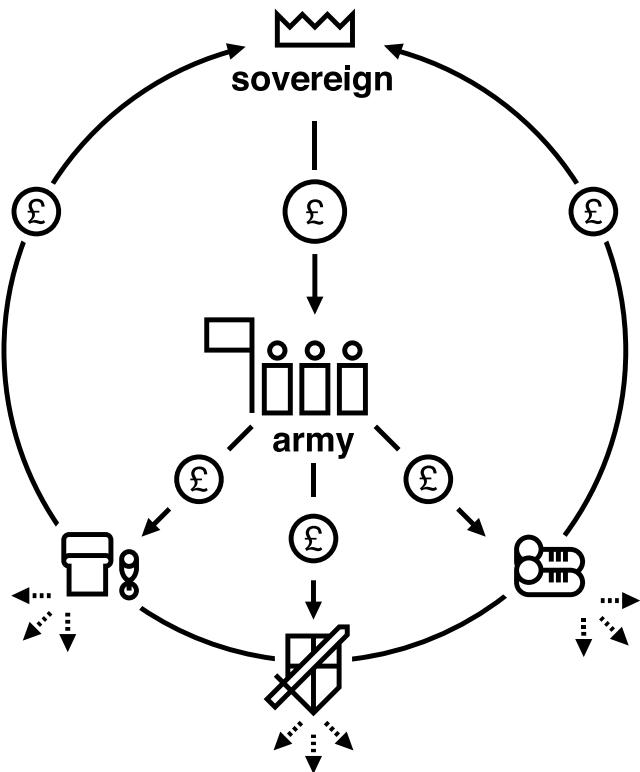


Bank robbers steal from some people so they can pay others.

It begins with the debt-logic of slavery and leads to the debt-logic of taxation as the catalyst of markets. He suggests that the coercive condition of slavery is one where all debts (obligations) that were owed previous to one becoming a slave are negated, and all that remains is the ostensibly absolute debt to one's conqueror. The reason for this ostensibility is that a defining feature of slavery is that slaves can be bought and sold, making the debt quantifiable. The primary consequence of this was that debt made it possible to formulate our modern understanding of money, and that it produced as a result the "...market: an arena where anything [could] be bought or sold, because all objects are (like slaves) dis-embodyed from their former social relations and exist only in relation to money."⁸

He elaborates on the parallel between the debt to the dominating slave-master and the debt to the sovereign with its monopoly on violence. In the instance of gold, which had by some process been found to be sufficiently acceptable as a universal discursive standard on the market of commodities—once it became money—it was those political actors with the capacity and means to exert force (to mobilize the resources to obtain gold through extraction [getting people to go into the ground for you] or conquest [getting people to kill for you]) who capitalised on this condition.

The acquired gold would be 'emitted' onto the subject population, through spending, particularly to raise and maintain a regular army. For sovereigns, the encouragement and maintenance of markets, argues Graeber, was more convenient than having to regularly levy whatever was needed. Essentially, sovereigns maintained regular armies with payment in coin, and then demanded the same coins through taxation from the subjugated population. This population was consequently compelled to tailor their production and establish markets to service the army and to obtain the coin to pay the sovereign's tax. What emerged was a kind of legitimate extortion racket—a structural relation of domination mediated by money (the discipline of the state being distributed



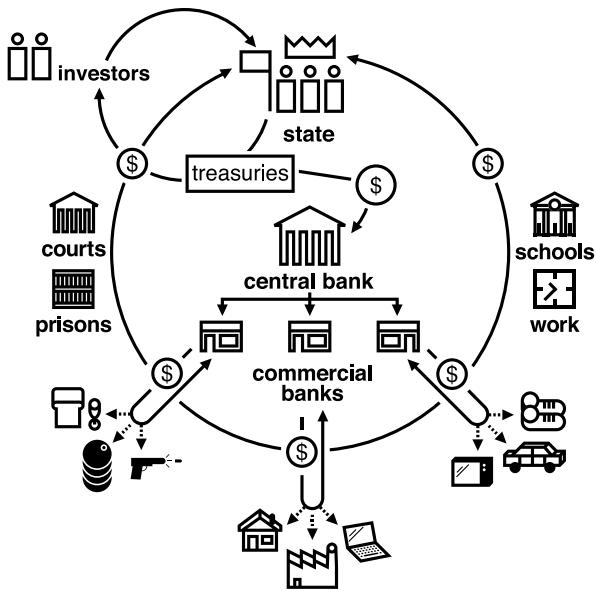
Military-coinage-complex

State and market emerge as two sides of the same coin. The sovereign issues payment to soldiers in a form that can retain its value over distance and time (i.e. gold). The sovereign subsequently demands the same form of payment through taxation (enforced by soldiers), from the population under its domain, thereby systematically incentivising the service of soldiers and the consequent emergence of markets.

through economic activity) and consequently, a conceptual enclosure on the legitimate representation of value.

This opens up a further parallel between sovereigns with their enclosure of the commons and that of the fractional reserve system of central banks. Such a banking system, which creates money through interest-bearing loans to the state, has usurped the capacity to emit money and left the state kicking in its own head to come up with the cash to pay off its debt to itself. Instead of markets existing to support soldiers, they now exist to serve banks and support an unsustainable perpetual growth imperative generated by usury. If goldsmiths became graphic designers, here bankers became a kind of financial avant-garde, carrying out a non-violent revolution and enclosing the common capacity to represent value behind a technocratic wall of inflation/deflation, adjusting interest rates on a flawed money system—when bankers say 'jump!' we say 'how high?' Democratically unaccountable central banks thus maintain an exclusive handle on the money faucet and perpetuate the paternalistic and violent logic of enclosure, exclusion and the maintenance of insecurity.

⁸ Graeber, David, 'Debt: The First Five Thousand Years' in *Mute*, Vol 2, No. 12, June 2009, p. 68.



Central banking system

\$100 is created when an investor purchases a \$100 bond (obligation) from the government, essentially as a loan to the state, guaranteed by its capacity to carry out sufficient taxation. This bond is distributed to the central bank accounts of commercial banks. The moment commercial banks issue interest bearing loans is the moment the money is actualised in the bank account of the borrower. The extra load of interest means that the supply of money is always shorter than what is ultimately owed to creditors. The production of defaulters is endemic to the system. Consequently, the privileged activities are those that are more likely to produce profit, indefinitely.

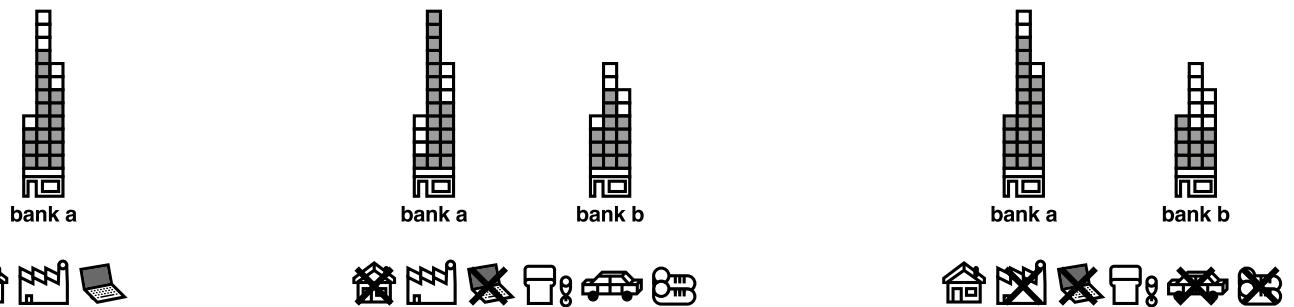
One may wonder why a population sufficiently organised could not institute a legitimate non-state, non-centralised (in terms of control and governance) alternative, or why these efforts are not more wide-spread, particularly if we consider currency to be primarily a form of information (rather than value)—what hinders people from representing information

and a mutual recognition of its legitimacy? Why do we concede to the inevitability of our current form of hegemonic money? In response, I propose looking at the notion of 'network power'. Even without the coercive power of the state, currencies can also be backed by the potential of marginalization if one does not comply with, or refuses a currency's 'network power'. I refer to the way the idea was developed in *Network Power: The Social Dynamics of Globalization* by David Grewal. For Grewal, the concept of the standard is pivotal to understanding the power dynamics of networks. Standards are the things that coordinate and facilitate sociability (languages, protocols, acceptable behaviours, currencies, etc.) and generate a kind of 'social gravity'.

Taking for example, a standard like the English language, one can easily grasp that a significant degree of its practical hegemony comes simply from the fact that because more people speak English, it becomes exponentially more compelling to learn the language in order to socialise and co-operate with others in a given network. At first this seems obvious and beneficial. But as the 'gravity' of a standard intensifies, and agents are *compelled*, for no other reason than that the viability of alternatives diminishes (or that switching to an alternative standard becomes too costly) the hegemony of a standard, its status as *koine* (with, for instance, its inherent conceptual limitations and biases), can start to resemble conditions of imprisonment.⁹

The problem of this condition is palpable particularly when we consider that the difference between the yen, the dollar or the euro is characteristic of the "narcissism of small differences" and that they all belong fundamentally to the same hegemonic category of money. To reiterate, all official, fiat currencies in circulation today created through central banks

⁹ Grewal, David, *Network Power: The Social Dynamics of Globalization*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2008, p. 111-113.



Money creation

- 1 Money is actualized the moment a loan is issued by a commercial bank. These loans carry an extra burden of interest.
- 2 The obligation to repay the principal and interest means that someone defaulting is an inevitability, since the amount of money in circulation is insufficient to meet everyone's obligations.
- 3 Fortunately, a broader network of borrowers who have also taken out loans with other banks is available.
- 4 Unfortunately, the overall insufficiency of the money supply remains, perpetuating a compulsion to exploit and marginalise others to avoid one's own insolvency.

(which in many cases such as the United States and the Federal Reserve Bank, are ostensibly state institutions, but for all intents and purposes actually private enterprises).¹⁰

The naturalised imperative for perpetual growth and accumulation, and its attendant practices of competition and exploitation, are motivated further by the threat of social-economic marginalisation (poverty) resulting from non-compliance with a network standard. All economic actors, from owners to workers, are thus equally implicated in the continued use of a standard of exchange that compels them to struggle against each other. It remains a stubborn fact however, that the stronger incentive for those closer to marginality, to desire, demand and develop alternatives to such an asymmetrical situation. To advocates of alternative currencies, the great error is the use of commodity *money*—an ideal form for the hoarding of wealth—as *currency*, which in its ideal form facilitates the circulation of wealth.

Designing resistance, exodus

Escape from this situation would constitute nothing short of an ‘exodus’, and would require a (re-)presentation of value as a reification of a different, hopefully democratic source of legitimacy. One may take up the argument that capitalism’s essential operation lies in a matrix of the maintenance of scarcity, with its attendant intensification of insecurity and imperative to accumulate and grow. The potential of reterritorialising the struggle against capital from the field of class antagonism to what Richard Day might call a ‘non-hegemonic’ contest over standards presents itself. The ‘non-hegemonic’ posture Day illuminates in his book *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, manifests as a radical challenge to the ‘hegemony of hegemony’. For example, Day points out that radical indigenous politics in North America does not only seek self-governance, but also to challenge the “...European notion of sovereignty upon which the system [of] states is constructed.”¹¹ Similarly, alternative currencies are not necessarily efforts aimed at annihilating the hegemony of commodity-money and replacing it with another hegemonic money, but rather challenge radically what (and how) money can be, bypassing the anxiety and stalemate of an insurmountable condition and raising the possibility of a plurality of ‘minor monies’.

One could also be utterly pragmatic and populist and simply ask why the absence of ‘official’ currency should cause stagnation when there are what North calls economically ‘sub-altern’ groups with the capacity and will to work, and others that need work done?

¹⁰ We also have to ask why the state privileges or fails to challenge the punitive obligations to undemocratic usurious institutions? Why do banks, as unaccountable private institutions have such a central role in the meta-governance of nations? A group called the Central Bank of the Transnational Republics argues that money should be considered a fourth branch of power next to the executive, judicial and legislative branches.

¹¹ Day, Richard J.F., *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, Pluto Press, London, 2005, p. 4.



Wörgl

The case of Wörgl, Austria in the mid 30s is illustrative. Based on the ideas of Silvio Gesell, the mayor of this town, Michael Unterguggenberger, implemented a ‘demurrage’ currency, which was designed to *lose* value over time in a process of ‘reversed-interest’ so that it ‘decayed’ like other natural commodities. The perhaps cumbersome design feature of adding stamps to the ‘labour notes’ every month represented a note’s decrease in value. This feature de-incentivised hoarding and accelerated the velocity of circulation. Being valid only in Wörgl and a neighbouring village, 12,000 schillings of labour note wages facilitated the production of over 100,000 schillings in public works. The town enjoyed the status of being an oasis of economic activity in the midst of the Great Depression.¹²

In effect, the official fiat currency, which had seen tightened circulation, was made redundant, and in many ways the new currency challenged the legitimacy of the national state. It represented a challenge to what Peter North, invoking Foucault, understands as a *local system of domination*, “...in which we are trapped but which we also resist.”¹³ It brings to light the perception of currency as a (constructed) structuring discourse which can be challenged with “micro-political technologies.”¹⁴

“The effects of power are everywhere, but, consequently, so is resistance to it. But this resistance is in the form not of one ‘great refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions.’ Rather, there is ‘a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are savage, solitary, concerted,

¹² The ‘Miracle of Wörgl’ attracted the attention of the Austrian Central Bank who claimed an exclusive right to issue currency, and the Wörgl program was outlawed, driving the town back into severe depression.

¹³ North, p. 33.

¹⁴ ibid., p. 37.

rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial' [Foucault 1998, 96]."¹⁵

The alternative currency movement could be read tentatively as an 'affinity' network of non-hegemonic heterotopian endeavours,¹⁶ to the extent that alternative currency programs for the most part appear to address the 'gaps' of the formal economy. They tend not to emerge from the analyses of classic Marxist or anarchist struggles and as far as I can tell do not strive for revolutionary annihilation of the standing hegemony. For some radicals and militants, this may be disappointing, and in some kind of final analysis, come off as apolitical and complacent. I would argue however that their subversiveness is to be found in the pluralisation of the space of exchange and "...illuminate[s] local power circulations and are an affective means of local struggle against this local power... They may be one of Guattari and Negri's 'thousand machines of art, life and solidarity.'"¹⁷ They render the space of exchange standards agonistic, but bypass a hopeless stalemate of hegemonies.

This is not to say that ultimately, alternative currency schemes remain at the level of symbolic representative gestures. I would emphasise the opposite—the potential for a plethora of alternative currency systems to actualise the autonomist 'exodus' is staggering. Operating as an informal, decentralised and non-hegemonic 'affinity' network, they would render redundant, as *a thousand local machines*, the hegemonic discursive standard, re-channeling—re-weaving—the warp and weft of the economic fabric of 'empire', to the point that its collapse means devastation only for those fully invested and insistent on fiat money's hegemonic configuration of reality. Here lies its properly antagonistic dimension. The potential critical moment here is the one when debt-obligations to unaccountable financial institutions go the way of the emperor's new clothes, which rather than being a great moment of refusal that reifies hegemonic dominance, ultimately disempowers the interests and institutions of the current *koine*. However, the problem of legitimacy persists. One urgent challenge of graphic design is then to consider how to account for the question of legitimacy—i.e. yes, we can design an I.D. card, but the design only 'functions' if there is someone to 'punish' those without one...

Far be it for me to suggest that 'speculative numismatics' and alternative currencies, as forms of monetary contestation necessarily represent an overlooked and definitive anti-capitalist silver bullet. My intention rather is to emphasise them as living critical projects. They represent a critical practice of design that recognises itself as such at the point of conception and is situated in a material urgency. They subvert the client-designer-printer/programmer paradigm, and

empower commissioners as designer/agents.¹⁸ This empowering is not intended as a patronising gesture to elevate a non-professionalised practice, but rather to call out the political dimension of graphic design while destabilising and opening up its practical boundaries.

Will graphic design continue to be taught and practiced almost exclusively as an affirmative practice of capital? Or can even *political* graphic design go beyond, as North claims, Foucault's emphasis on domination and move toward what Deleuze and Guattari would call "...positive reterritorializations of unconstrained and undominated territory through creative local political action."¹⁹ It seems to me that this is a task that graphic design (*particularly* as a non-professionalised, reterritorializ/ed/ing activity) is well poised to interrogate and execute. Perhaps in a gesture of reterritorialization, a departure from graphic design as such, towards 'speculative numismatics' calls for a praxis rooted in the relationship between force (violence, power) and the signs that represent and circulate them.

15 ibid., p. 34.

16 See Day, Richard J.F., *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, Pluto Press, London, 2005.

17 ibid., p. 39.

18 Many designers may take issue with this because it challenges the post-Fordist anxiety of designers to be recognised as authors in their own right—an anxiety for recognition that ultimately intensifies the atomisation of designers making them a kind of 'zombie' working class subject fuelling the cybernetic machinery of advanced-capitalism.

19 North, p. 35.

Bitcoin, the end of the taboo on money

Denis Roio aka Jaromil / dyne.org

The most powerful forces, those that interest us the most, are not in a specular and negative relation to modernity, to the contrary they move on transversal trajectories. On this basis we shouldn't conclude that they oppose everything that is modern and rational, but that are engaged in creating new forms of rationality and new forms of liberation.

– Negri and Hardt, *Commonwealth*, 2010

Bitcoin is a decentralised system of digital authentication that facilitates the circulation of value on the Internet without the presence of any intermediaries, a characteristic that has often gained it the definition of 'digital cash' or 'crypto currency', since it can be used as money for payments. However this article doesn't aim to describe to the reader what Bitcoin is: there are several information sources that already accomplish that, starting from well-designed video animations,¹ vast numbers of press and academic articles listed on the Wikipedia entry,² and even a rather positive dramatisation in an episode of the popular TV series 'The Good Wife'.³

Rather than divulging the functionality of Bitcoin or its vulnerabilities, or even building an interpretation of it according to economic theories, this article investigates historical and philosophical aspects related to the emergence of this technology. To accomplish this, I have been involved with the Bitcoin community for more than two years, engaging in both cooperative and critical exchanges with its members.

Money is a fundamental medium upon which to build constituency and consolidate sovereignty. This research investigates the need for such a constituency, its urgency and emergence as a form of subjectivation. Ultimately this article provides a picture of the cultural context into which

Bitcoin was grafted, and how it has grown up to what it is now, offering keys to interpretation of its social and political aspects.

Origins

In 1994, almost two decades ago, a vast amount of time in the rhythms of digital life, Steven Levy published an article titled 'E-Money (That's What I Want)' in *Wired*, with an introduction that left the reader in no doubt:

"The killer application for electronic networks isn't video-on-demand. It's going to hit you where it really matters—in your wallet. It's not only going to revolutionize the Net, it will change the global economy."⁴

For those who don't know Steven Levy, author of books like *Crypto* or *Hackers*, let me just say that he is not the visionary type: his writings contain very little fantasy at all, and follow a journalistic approach in documenting the stories he investigates. In this article he voices the case of David Chaum "the bearded and ponytailed founder of DigiCash" who was working in Amsterdam to "catapult our currency system into the 21st century." In fact almost 20 years ago David Chaum was a researcher in the CWI, the National Research Institute for mathematics and computer science in the Netherlands, where in recent times I've had the honour to explain how Bitcoin functions⁵ in front of an audience of scientists that have worked with Chaum and who, honestly, made me feel quite embarrassed until I understood modesty is definitely one of their qualities.

Because I would like to start this article with a historical perspective, I can't help but track the origins of the evolution that Bitcoin represents into circumstances so well

1 Thomas, S., et al., 'What is Bitcoin?' (online animation, 1:44), [weusecoins](http://www.weusecoins.com/en), <http://www.weusecoins.com/en> accessed 7 Nov 2013.

2 References for the Bitcoin entry on Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bitcoin#References>.

3 Toepfer, S., 'The Good Wife', Season 3, Episode 13, 'Bitcoin for Dummies': TVrecap', *Speakeasy*, 16 Jan 2012 | <http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2012/01/16/the-good-wife-season-3-episode-13-bitcoin-for-dummies-tv-recap/> accessed 7 Nov 2013.

4 Levy, S., 'E-Money (That's What I Want)', *Wired*, issue 2.12, Dec 1994 <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.12/emoney.html> accessed 7 Nov 2013.

5 Roio, D., 'Bitcoin: P2P Virtual Currency', Software Freedom Day, 2011, online video recording at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdNRw-LWDUY> accessed 7 Nov. 2013.

debunked in Levy's article, which once again was absolutely ahead of its time.

But that's not all. Bitcoin is not just 'digital cash'. Its birth and growth have been fostered by a network of trust that, to some degree, shared ethical principles and the gestation of a constituency: I'm talking about hackers.

A Slashdot post⁶ on July 2010 brought Bitcoin to the attention of the hacker community when it announced the release of version 0.3. Previous to that, Bitcoin was only known to members of some minor cryptographer's now defunct mailing list. The Slashdot post heralded the launch of software that, through the distributed work of all on-line participants, would create unique 'hashes' which could then be exchanged as 'digital cash'. Hackers were at the time already familiar with this concept. A similar implementation was also in circulation that used so-called 'hashcash' to fight spam online by putting a 'computational price' on every email server willing to exchange emails. The distributed, or clustered architecture of this software also sounded to SETI@Home, a piece of software that distributed computational work needed for analysis of signals from space gathered by NASA observatories.

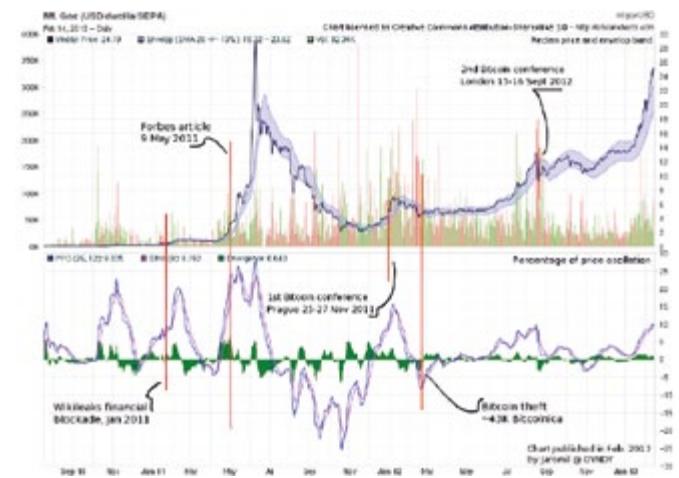
Memorable events

I want to highlight two memorable events from the two and a half years since the larger hacker community became aware of Bitcoin that will help make clear Bitcoin's historical progression:

- January 2011 – Wikileaks financial blockade
- May 2011 – Forbes Magazine publishes its first article on Bitcoin

In the rest of this article I will refer to these two events, and attempt to explain the complex relationships that govern social and political aspects of Bitcoin. The following chart is probably as close as I'll get in linking such relationships to *financial phenomena*, because as abstract models of human action they have very little importance to my enquiry.

My aim is to describe Bitcoin's technopolitical innovation without following universals such as those populating academic thinking in *economics*. Hence, I declare the methodology of this analysis to be *biopolitical*, in the sense that Michel Foucault gave to this word: the early genealogy of a new ethical sense, an enquiry into its gestation phase through the analysis of its processes of subjectivation. *This is Post-humanist Economics.*



Price graph of memorable events

In this chart we compare the chronology of these events to a graph showing the exchange rate of dollar vs Bitcoin on its biggest market 'MtGox'. The graph is doubled: above is the average exchange value and below is the percentage of oscillation of the price. This graph helps to outline the influence that socially relevant events have on Bitcoin's financial values.

Accounting science

The most remarkable innovation brought by Bitcoin deals with the system of accounting that we use today. Double-entry bookkeeping is what is currently used to ensure earnings and expenditures match, basically authenticating the flow of money and making sure 'nothing is duplicated'.



Friar Luca Pacioli (portrait by Jacopo de' Barbari, 1495)

From a historical perspective, the double-entry bookkeeping system is very ancient and has barely changed over centuries. It was described in 1494 by an Italian mathematician and Franciscan friar named Luca Pacioli who explained the necessity of mathematics in accountancy. Pacioli did not invent these principles, but primarily formalised and translated them. An earlier history is hinted at by the presence of another figure behind Pacioli in a famous painting attributed

⁶ kdawson, 'Bitcoin Releases Version 0.3', *Slashdot*, 10 July 2011
<http://news.slashdot.org/story/10/07/11/1747245/Bitcoin-Releases-Version-03>
 accessed 7 Nov 2013.

to Jacopo de' Barbari. The figure is believed to be Albrecht Dürer, an artist and traveller who shared Pacioli's passion for geometry and magic.

The double-entry bookkeeping system is still, as of today and despite its flaws, the one in use on large scale around the world in most accountancy systems. Being a system that ensures the *univoque* (single-valued) matching of what is written with what is real, it can be seen as gateway to the digital dimension and can undoubtedly benefit from technical innovation through digital tools. Bitcoin is such an innovation: it employs the *triple-signed receipt* method. Quoting Ian Grigg:

"The digitally signed receipt, with the entire authorisation for a transaction, represents a dramatic challenge to double entry bookkeeping at least at the conceptual level. The cryptographic invention of the digital signature gives powerful evidentiary force to the receipt, and in practice reduces the accounting problem to one of the receipt's presence or its absence. This problem is solved by sharing the records—each of the agents has a good copy. In some strict sense of relational database theory, double entry book keeping is now redundant."⁷

The accounting system of triple-signed receipts in Bitcoin respects the original role of money as contract (and digitised speech, I'd argue). Quoting Marco Sachy's research on complementary and alternative currency:

"In particular, the ontology of money is relational, abstract and cogent as agreements in general are and the possibilities to formulate the agreement are unimaginable, if one bears in mind that the the orthodox process of currency design and creation is—by drawing from Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of the Enlightenment—an arbitrary and historically determined one (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1947)."⁸

It is the very substance of those *cogent agreements* that money represents and can be verified by matching declarations on two books or, as Bitcoin does, calling the whole network of participating peers to witness every contract and entangling it into a cryptographic blockchain. Simply put, this is bookkeeping in the age of Bitcoin.

Why mining?

Mining is the act of creating Bitcoins, basically the act of finding this 'algorithmic mineral' and minting it into usable tokens. The process of mining is remunerative for those who run the Bitcoin mining software on their computers. In simple terms, mining transforms electricity into Bitcoins: computers look for numbers that have not yet been discovered and, once they have found them, they can be exchanged as coins within the network. Miners generate the wealth, and then put it into circulation at their own discretion.

Back in March 2011, still a few months before the popularisation of Bitcoin, which unavoidably raised the level of noise for the discussion about it, netizen Mira Luna reblogged on her journal *Trust is the Only Currency* what I believe to be the best criticism of Bitcoin. I'll quote here the conclusion of this blog post, titled 'BitCoin: a Rube-Goldberg Machine for Buying Electricity':

"In the end, the artificial creation of the limited number of possible BitCoins via this 'proof of work' (doing millions of SHA-256 hashes over and over) is madness. All you really need is to have 'proof of limitation' without the politics—was the market restrained from creating too much money too fast? BitCoin's use of a procedural solution is the wrong track when all you need do is define a constraint via a formula and apply it as needed over time, instead of everyone continuously spinning a hash function and wasting electricity. Keep the transactions public, cryptographically sign them, and audit them with a money model and you'll be able to keep much of what is good about BitCoin. And of course, use a 'commodity' the people can intuitively understand, something like... time."⁹

To go further with this criticism I should explain what this *madness* is and why it can be considered instead an interesting innovation. When miners do their work (hence consuming electricity) Bitcoins 'magically' appear, but their work also benefits the community: they strengthen the network of trust by making Bitcoins less likely to be counterfeited.

The computation of mining and hence, the consumption of electricity, is there to strengthen the authentication of Bitcoin. Now let us consider the energy that was required, before the existence of Bitcoin, to authenticate the minting process of currency made of paper and metal. It consists of a secret minting procedure, big machines, a monumental building with thick walls and armed guards at its perimeters: an unstable kind of energy, very difficult to govern, as it relates to a monopoly on violence imposed by the sovereign state.

7 Grigg, I., 'Triple Entry Accounting', ianq.org/papers/triple_entry.html accessed 7 Nov 2013.

8 Sachy, M., 'The Empowering Potential of Complementary Currencies and Alternative Payment Systems' in *Silent University Reader*, 2012, via <http://www.dyndy.net/silent-university/>.

9 Acrylicist, A., 'BitCoin: a Rube-Goldberg Machine for Buying Electricity', Time as Money, via *Trust is the Only Currency* <http://trustcurrency.blogspot.nl/2011/03/bitcoin-rube-goldberg-machine-for.html> accessed 7 Nov 2013.

This very energy is substituted by Bitcoin with a qualitatively different approach: Bitcoin distributes the task of building *trust in its authenticity* to peers. The networked computation of all miners serves as a mint and dissolves the need for violence into an unlimited, unreachable and decentralised power.

The decentralisation of the mint gathers the energy necessary to establish and protect the authenticity of the currency.

In other words, participation has substituted violence in the physical implementation of currency authentication, which is a recognisable pattern when we look at historical manifestations of the digital plane of immanence.

This transformation still leaves the problem of redistribution for the minted coins. It does not solve the problem of shared wealth, of poverty, of accumulation and consequent inequality. But we are now back to a familiar problem for money, after having dispelled the risk of a paradoxical machine, the Rube-Goldberg, which would have dissolved the Bitcoin's concept of work in pure entropy.

Community

At the core... is the idea that people should design for themselves their own houses, streets and communities. This idea... comes simply from the observation that most of the wonderful places of the world were not made by architects but by the people.

– Christopher Alexander, *A Language Pattern*, 1977

When talking about Bitcoin, of its inherent qualities of networked creation of value mentioned above, we can't ignore the fact that this technology relies on community dynamics to the point one could state that Bitcoin makes it possible for *money to become a common* and no longer a top-down convention imposed by a sovereign entity and its liturgy of power.

But then we are faced with crucial questions about Bitcoin: What is it for? Who benefits from it? Or, in other words, if the community aspect of Bitcoin is crucial (as in: distributing the computation needed for its authentication, sharing a common currency, a common history of transactions, a common way to quantify wealth) what do communities use Bitcoin for?

The first communities to adopt Bitcoin, aside from the hacker community, which has never really used it much as a currency to exchange goods, are perfect scapegoats for those who want to bring Bitcoin down. In fact, anyone willing to take a moralistic approach and prohibit the innovation that we are talking about doesn't even need to approach irritating (or controversial) concepts such as state sovereignty. It is very easy for witch-hunters to emphasise the fact that Bitcoins were used to buy and sell drugs, that gamblers love Bitcoins

and that at least one website claims to accept Bitcoin payments for assassination missions. Criminalising campaigns have been overly present in the mainstream media coverage immediately since the popularisation of Bitcoin. In Italy we saw even popular prophets of internet optimism turning against Bitcoin in the blink of an eye.¹⁰

But then, we should never rush to judge the nature and goals of new technologies based on the early period of their adoption. It is natural for those who were excluded from the use of established technologies to look for new, as yet unregulated platforms: pioneers at the margins are always attentive to the concrete possibilities of liberation offered by new and unknown technology. When speaking of communication technologies this becomes very clear: all kinds of marginalised and criminalised communities resort to lesser known channels of communication for their needs, while mass communication channels are well policed and in general dominated by the sanitised discourse of the conforming majority. Debating what motivates prohibitionists in their crusade is far outside the scope of this article, yet what does need to be stated here is that the potential of new tech cannot be studied, understood and judged in reference to such circumstances. The criminalised examples in the early adoption of Bitcoin are in fact misleading for the purposes of a balanced understanding of this technology.

The fact is that many hackers love to tease, and this attitude, common to a small number of criminals who found it convenient to use Bitcoin since the early phases of its popularisation, is still grounds for the mystification of Bitcoin as an 'evil technology'.

Being involved in the community that has grown around Bitcoin, I can see that it is comprised primarily of young idealists rebelling against the status quo, especially centralised administrations prone to corruption. It is clear to many how unjust monopolies are. They often dominate various contexts and curb the opportunities to innovate that are within reach of younger generations. The liberation of the medium of value exchange is an act we refer to as 'breaking the Taboo on Money'. Bitcoin has a role in history: its epos coalesces in communities, new ethical reflections, new tales of passion, the glory in all the mystery surrounding its origins. The will for liberation, decentralisation and disintermediation is central to Bitcoin—it is ethical and should not be seen as more conflictual than the concrete need to disintermediate many of the systemic functions that are governing modern society. Mind your own long-tailed problems, modern finance!

Many see in Bitcoin the opportunity to challenge the bank monopoly on value transactions. Most goods that were first exchanged online for Bitcoins, excluding those on the dark side, digital or otherwise, were artisanal creations. The Bitcoin dream is the autonomy of content producers, the ability

10 People like Riccardo Luna for instance, a televised advocate of Internet and digital innovation in Italy, started a media crusade against what he calls the 'Dark web'.

to exchange their products freely, without aggregations, without intermediaries. After all, most financial transaction operators know well that the reason small artisans cannot enter online markets are the high marginal costs they need to face if they want to accept online payments, while the apparatus that are able to negotiate trust with banks are imposing themselves as taxing intermediaries. It is ironic that such a natural evolution of an accountancy system has become somehow more revolutionary than many other forms of criticism of finance: access, after all, is another foundational concept of free markets. This revolution is internal to the language of economics, it is grafted onto its grammar.

As a concrete but not unbiased hint to the reader, here is my little protest against the capitalism of flows, an informal text that I posted on the *Nettime* discussion list back in April 2011, just before the popularisation of Bitcoin in the *Forbes* article published in May. While responding to early criticism of Bitcoin, this letter ended up being circulated on the Bitcoin forum and as the 'Bitcoin Manifesto', gathering approval from different members of the community:

On Thursday, 7 Apr 2011, a...@aharonic.net wrote/posted:

"> bitcoins—isn't this simply a distributed structure to do capitalism with?

That's not even the worst you can do with it. You can do money laundering, buy drugs online and sex toys, all anonymously. But that's not the point, because despite the coercion imposed by all kinds of regulatory systems so far, also current official monetary systems are full of that shit, on top of the capitalist pie.

Emerging technologies should never be judged by the sensational bad taste of early adopters. It's like being concerned about the shit that fertilizes some beautiful flowers, wasting their seeds.

What bitcoin really is, I finally understood on the 6 April (which somehow always ends up being a magic day, eh!): this is now the end of the flow capitalism, which consists of the monopoly on transactions, the hegemony of banks on the movement of values and not just their storage, this middleman mafia strangling the world as we speak.

How right are those South American countries asking for the 'taxation of transactions', an argument refrained in many speeches of the compañeros. They studied the system and understood that there is a crucial problem, that needs to be solved urgently. Yet I'd argue that taxation on transactions cannot be the solution. The solution is to eliminate the flow capitalists.

If I want to give you money I'll give it to you. Me and you, period. Its fine that we'll pay our taxes for our communities, don't get me wrong this is not a tea bagger argument. Its just not right that all what we do is in the hands of a third party

that has already been caught cheating many times: look at what happened at the Paypal accounts of the Iraqi Linux user group back in 2004, or even more recently to WikiLeaks.

We don't need those fat cheaters to be in between our value transactions anymore; the flow capital has played its disgusting role in the little laps of history for which it has been needed, now sadly these people won't give up what they have accumulated, so it makes more sense to leave them alone and multiply more monetary systems that work efficiently across diverse networks and that rely on the neutrality of a cryptographic authentication.

The death of the flow capital is a new stage for the necrotization of capitalism."¹¹

Beyond the shouted points made in this little speech lies an important hint: Bitcoin will be of central importance for migrant economies.

Today it is easy to witness the existence of large communities that are displaced around the world in the desperate attempt to recuperate from the territorial differential of value for their labour. Many of those who work abroad are sending money back to their families and communicating constantly with them, a natural phenomenon on which the market of telephone and money transfer shops all over the world flourish. These nodes of communication are extremely important for migrants, who can't live without them and most of the time end up being harshly taxed for their use. Monopolies like that of Moneygram or Western Union claim that no commission is applied to transactions, but their de-facto currency rates sometimes hide up to 20% for their profit.

Such profit on transactions is made upon data transfer that is comparable to that of a telephone call and it is not a coincidence that such shops often offer both services. Today there is no reason why such a market of digital transaction shouldn't be freed in a fashion similar to what Voice over IP did for telephone monopolies. This is an old vector of evolution offered by the digital dimension and its progressive interaction with reality that I call *digital immanence*: yet another scheme based on the artificial economy of scarcity is trembling!

Passion

Previously, I mentioned that Bitcoin's epos coalesces in new tales of passion.

The history of humanity concerns the ways in which the human race has created fields of objectification, and, in this way, has created itself as subject. For every process of subjectivity emerging in history, passion is crucial. Analyses such

¹¹ *Bitcoin forum*, 'Bitcoin Manifesto' thread on <https://bitcointalk.org/index.php?topic=5671.0>.

as the one conducted by Giorgio Agamben in his enquiry on sovereignty and glory show that it was historically possible to codify passion (and its mysteries) into power. Through the analysis of the ancient codes constituting laws and ethics, Agamben shows that the power (and mystery) of passion is close to that of economics and its birth.

Extract from the Bitcoin blockchain: a tribute to Len Sassaman

The image shows an ASCII extract from the Bitcoin blockchain, a tribute that was irremediably inscribed into the transaction history chain. A memorial to a leader of the 'cypherpunk movement' is codified, literally, into Bitcoin's 'blockchain', decorated with typical hacker irony. This is just a hint of what may appear as an 'insider joke', but is in fact the strong trace of a shared narrative.

The historical episode of passion in Bitcoin is connected to another project that is strongly related to the cypherpunk movement: its name, incredibly well known today, is WikiLeaks.

Wikileaks provided the supreme moment (*καιρός*) for Bitcoin to become an urgency within the cypherpunk imagination, and that of hackers at large: I'm talking about the financial blockade to Wikileaks.

Below is an excerpt of an account of this episode by WikiLeaks staff. A whole page has been dedicated to it on their website:

"Since 7th December 2010, an arbitrary and unlawful financial blockade has been imposed by Bank of America, VISA, MasterCard, PayPal and Western Union. The attack has destroyed 95% of our revenue. [...] The blockade is outside of any accountable, public process. It is without democratic oversight or transparency. The US government itself found that there were no lawful grounds to add WikiLeaks to a US financial blockade. [...] The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has openly criticized the financial blockade against WikiLeaks. [...] The blockade erects a wall between us and our supporters, preventing them from affiliating with and defending the cause of their choice. It violates the

competition laws and trade practice legislation of numerous states. It arbitrarily singles out an organization that has not committed any illegal act in any country and cuts it off from its financial lifeline in every country.”¹²

In the US, publishing is protected by the First Amendment, as has been repeatedly demonstrated by a wide variety of respected US constitutional law experts. In January 2011, the US Secretary of the Treasury, Timothy C. Geithner, announced that there were no grounds to blacklist WikiLeaks. There are no judgements, or even charges, against WikiLeaks or its staff anywhere in the world.

The blockade was an immediate reaction to the ‘Cablegate’ release, when an enormous amount of classified US diplomatic documents were published by WikiLeaks. This episode displeased many powerful people in the US (arguably, WikiLeaks has hit the US military-industrial complex in many ways). Though the WikiLeaks organisation received much appreciation from all over the world, also in the form of monetary donations. While the media wave of Cablegate was reverberating through the world’s screens, international transaction monopolies like Maestro and Visa blocked WikiLeaks from receiving donations, without a legal mandate, nor a court order. WikiLeaks also had its registered Internet domains obscured, with the exception of a single one that was registered in Switzerland.

Hackers believe the world can be changed and, while understanding the importance of code and shared protocols, they are determined to play on *neutral* grounds, which is also a condition for change to happen. Some readers may judge hackers as naïve for believing that there can actually be *network neutrality*, most system analysts, even in the financial sector, have recognised the presence of long-tail errors. Those familiar with the principles enunciated in *Taleb's The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (2007) will agree that it is impossible to establish neutrality within a tainted system, but, for the hacker community at large, the WikiLeaks financial blockade was a radically new moment of fundamental betrayal. Thus it was crucial momentum for the growth of Bitcoin: several hackers adopted it at that moment, feeling that it was, rationally, liberally, the next thing to do. The growth of Bitcoin started then, as visible in the first chart it was five months previous to the first popularising Forbes article.

12 WikiLeaks, 'Banking Blockade' <http://wikileaks.org/Banking-Blockade.html> accessed 7 Nov 2013.

Glory

Glory, in theology as much as in politics, is what takes the place of the inconceivable void that is the idleness of power; and, nevertheless, is this very inconceivable emptiness that nourishes and feeds the power (or, more accurately, what the apparatus of power transforms into nourishment.)

– Giorgio Agamben, *Il Regno e La Gloria*, 2007 (translated by the author)

Every form of currency, since the very beginning of its earliest forms, has dealt with the grammar of power. It is the establishment of a sovereign power and its glory that justifies the shared trust in a symbolic form of value circulation. The investment of power into currency, especially when it is not backed by mineral value, is codified in mystery and glory.

Bitcoin is not exempt from such dynamics: it innovatively makes the digital into something tangible, a role with highly disruptive potential. Hence, even when choosing the iconography for its own currency, the Bitcoin community revealed political rupture.

The intriguing mystery of the identity of its disappearing author Satoshi Nakamoto might seem to be a small detail, but not for our analysis: it is of central importance to the Bitcoin myth and that of future crypto-currencies. Bitcoin has no single monetary authority, but a shared pact and the underlying rationality of a mathematical algorithm—the intangible dream of neutrality. Being deflationary, Bitcoins exist within a finite range of possibilities, a quantity of value that is increasingly difficult to mine. No one can create more Bitcoins than those established to be created in the first place, to the great horror of modern economists, who regard fiat currency as a necessary tool to move through the troubled waters of contemporaneity, with good reason indeed. But there is no hierarchy in Bitcoin, meaning literally that there is no sacred origin (*iεραπχία*), no written fate, no single ruler, no second thought on its essence.

Bitcoin promises to be the neutral medium for an economy based on participation, not the edict of a king, a central bank, or their authorised intermediaries—nevertheless, it must be said, Bitcoin did create new riches for those who believed earlier than others in the promise of this algorithm. The rupture offered by this new perspective on money is not dealing with equality or welfare, it might not benefit society or help us get out of the crisis: it is a demand for network neutrality.

Such a medium, we must also admit, will likely incarnate the market freedom of the Austrian school of economics. The European Central Bank produced an analysis of the Bitcoin scheme in October 2012, reciting:

“The theoretical roots of Bitcoin can be found in the Austrian school of economics and its criticism of the current fiat money system and interventions undertaken by

governments and other agencies, which, in their view, result in exacerbated business cycles and massive inflation.”¹³

This insight should be handled carefully: it might overstate on the ambitions of Bitcoin, which first and foremost is a successful implementation of a system for value transactions in the digital domain, whose success is due to the biopolitical dynamics being explored in this article. Nevertheless, the interpretation of its *ethos in fieri* is not far from reality. It is paradoxical how, in a time in which we face the failure of most Austrian economic theories, we are confronted with narratives that mystify and popularise them on the wave of technical innovation and functional transformation. But this is a reductionist way to describe Bitcoin and it strictly depends on the adoption of universal categories: I am convinced such a method of analysis can't lead the quest for comprehension we are engaging here. So let's take a step back from this dead end and look into Bitcoin's symbology.

If we look back in the history of icons used to mint money, we'll find a long stream of symbols of leadership: heads or bodies of humans or animals that address or signify the power of scientists, rulers, educators, judges or that of a nation-state. Many are the symbols of hierarchy that govern the minting and authentication of the currency, as well symbols of wealth and geographical maps. I'll refrain now from engaging an analysis of such symbols used in the past, but observe that Bitcoin has and will have a different symbology to glorify it.



Alpaca symbol on an early sketch for physical Bitcoins

The iconography of Bitcoin reflects the shared values of the community behind it. If there were a person representative of it, it would be Bitcoin's mysterious creator Satoshi

13 European Central Bank, *Virtual Currency Schemes*, Oct 2012, p. 22.

Nakamoto, but the fact that he doesn't really exist makes things much more interesting. One of the early symbols of Bitcoin was alpaca, for instance the mock-up presented here comes from an old forum's thread and in its own way it is meant to celebrate the first artisans that ever sold their creations on the Bitcoin market.

As an experiment, in a previous article for the Bitcoin community I've suggested the use of the empty throne as a symbol that bridges classical, modern and post-human iconography. The image of an empty prepared throne (έτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ Θρόνου) is an icon found in the Old Testament and in the philosophical texts comprising the Upanishad. The empty throne was used on minted currency in the Augustan era and sculpted exemplars of it have been found in Knossos and Rome.

But the response of the Bitcoin community to such an old symbol of power, despite the fact it could represent the absence of Satoshi Nakamoto, has been negative. Someone commented that "perhaps a broken empty throne would be even better, symbolizing the breaking of the old power", someone else suggested that "a physical Bitcoin should have a mirror in the middle. Bitcoin is all about the individual", and another suggestion was "Bitcoin is mercurial—it's quicksilver. It's the fool of the tarot and a touchstone. It turns base electrons into gold. It subverts and debases all norms and conventions. The fool is the perfect symbol for Bitcoin".¹⁴ Many supported the use of the Guy Fawkes mask, already adopted by Anonymous, from the V for Vendetta comics and movie.

The glory behind Bitcoin is mostly shrouded in mystery, revolt against tyrannical injustice, the reclamation of individual rights, power distribution and disintermediation, and self-determination. But also, I strongly argue, in the transverse presence of a community feeling and the joyous consciousness that a powerful process is unfolding in history: those participating have the opportunity to express themselves in their diversity, rather than the uniformed, sterile and omnipresent corporate language of economics.

After the phase in which the Multitude has built its body inside the language, the next opening cycle of conflicts will see the Multitude engaged in the construction of its body beyond language.

– Christian Marazzi, *Il Posto dei Calzini*, 1999 (translated by the author)

Popularity

By now it should be clear that such a process of subjectivation as the one I am describing is not the simple emergence of a new innovative technology, it is not just a λόγος on τέχνη, but goes well beyond. The enormous popularisation of Bitcoin is proof that the dimensions of this process of subjectivation are multiple and cannot be comprehended by adopting a single narrative, and even less so by using the categories of economic analysis.

The popularity of Bitcoin as of today is enormous and still growing: this is a result of the biopolitical progression described above and its inscription inside a particular context, it is not a quality of Bitcoin itself. Bitcoin is rooted in the protest movements that accompanied the financial crisis through 2009 until now, namely the Occupy movement. While there can be reason to conceal this fact for those who hail the unconditioned and instrumental success of Bitcoin, it is important to account for this historically in order to understand what might happen in the future.



Protestors weaving a Bitcoin banner in Occupy Amsterdam, July 2012.

The cultural scene around Bitcoin is shaped around new values that, despite their many pitfalls, incarnate the rebellion against 'The System'. In the last Bitcoin conference in Europe we have clearly seen that those people closest to it are definitely interested in the larger picture: they are conscious that a systemic critique is the underpinning of Bitcoin existence, to the point that the next conference title was changed from being focused only on Bitcoin to being called the 'unSystem' conference and featuring Anonymous, Occupy London, Voina¹⁵ and Birgitta Jónsdóttir¹⁶ among the speakers.

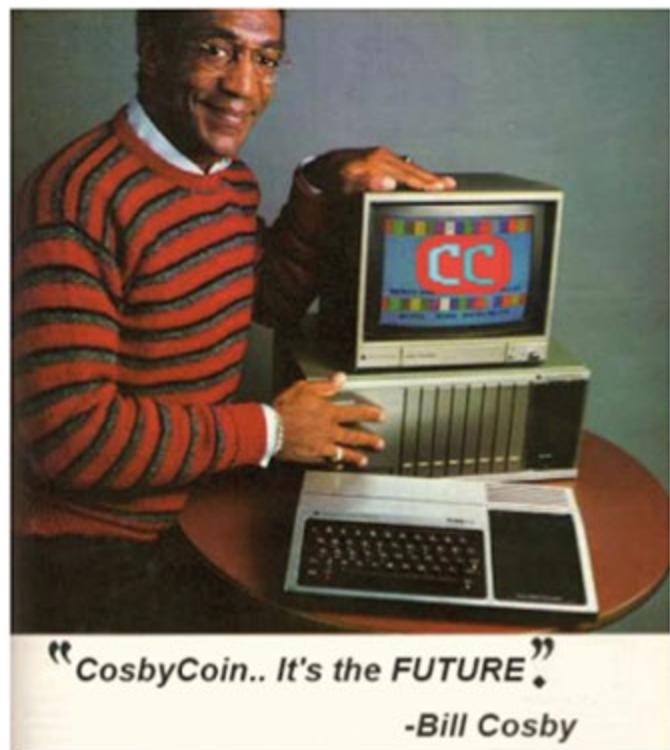
14 This exchange took place on the *Bitcoinmedia.com* website, which is no longer online.

15 A Russian street-art group well known for their provocative and politically charged works of performance art.

16 Member of the Constitutional Assembly of the Icelandic Parliament and former member of WikiLeaks.

Being popular also means to be branched, forked, replicated, cloned, recombined and ultimately appropriated by the people: a popular icon will feed the mind of popular culture without consuming itself, but confusing its authenticity in the existence of new popular instances. This is already happening to Bitcoin with very interesting consequences. Considering that its popularity is mostly among the hacker (or, should we say, cyborg?) community, the branching of Bitcoin is giving birth to many valid technical implementations, which are both capable of functioning on large scale, and explore novel approaches to currency and networking.

Among the first offshoots of Bitcoin were ironic implementations of it: like Cosby coin featuring the popular TV star Bill Cosby with a computer, or Carrots—just carrots, or Weed which was a currency matched to the value of its developer's favourite Thai beer.



An ironical example of Bitcoin fork

But there are also serious extensions of Bitcoin, both alternative and complementary to it, and we can expect more in future: NameCoin (whose functionality is to register new network domains) or LiteCoin (which can be mined on the same machines used to mine Bitcoins, without interference) are just some valid examples.

A particularly interesting one is Freicoin,¹⁷ which grafts on ideas by Silvio Gesell for a monetary system with zero interest on credit. The value of currency 'decays', meaning that as time goes by it loses value. Freicoin cannot work as the storage of value, a common practice among Bitcoin users, therefore it circulates faster. Implementing this feature,

referred to as 'demurrage', makes Freicoin one of the most promising spin-offs of Bitcoin today, at least in theory.

With my own pet project in the Bitcoin galaxy, something called Freecoin,¹⁸ I've started documenting the phenomenon of Bitcoin forking since its early days and advocated within the community for the 'configurability of the genesis code' and in general to leverage the possibilities of customisation for the technology underlying Bitcoin. It is my belief that, while Bitcoin represents a unique political rupture with the old establishment governing money, it is not the ultimate solution to it, nor to the demands of our time for a digitally-borne currency.

Reinforced by the popularity and all consequences we have explored here, Bitcoin may be understood as a fixed reference for future implementations, and its value will only grow in this future.

Conclusion

The time has come to explain the title of this article, namely, that Bitcoin is breaking the Taboo on Money. For many years we have taken money for granted, without even questioning its engineering, without analysing accountancy in systemic terms. We have used it and we have been used by it. To paraphrase Georg Simmel, we have made ourselves 'indirect beings', the intermediaries between money and the creation and satisfaction of our own desires.

As though it were a taboo that we cannot acknowledge because it is too delicate, we have avoided questioning what makes money exist. Over the past 50 and more years, people have quietly accepted the transformation of money into something more abstract than it had been, far from everyone's hands, in fact becoming just numbers in the databases of banks, a gesture of interaction with computers that know more than we do about our possessions. While being the 'root of all evil' for some, it has become close to a religion for others, but in both cases money has been too important to be questioned and its evolution too natural to be interfered with by the masses. It is a system that permeates most, if not all, societal interactions, at least in the Western world, so we assume it to be neutral and, in any case, we will never question its existence.

Most political analyses study the dynamics related to the distribution of money, its relation to labour, accumulation, use value and exchange values. Universals have governed the entire discourse around monetary engineering and mathematical models have been the method to explain its aspects. As a glaring exception to this, there are sociological analyses such as that made by Max Weber that evaluated the relationship between ethics and money across historical mutations of society. Yet, to this day, there have been

17 "Freicoin: a peer-to-peer digital currency delivering freedom from usury"
<http://freico.in>.

18 "Freecoin is not a currency, but a suite to create P2P currencies"
<http://freecoin.ch>.

few who dared to look more closely at money without the protective goggles of its historically established universals: dissecting this medium has been a self-imposed taboo for many researchers and practitioners, just like a dead body that we are not allowed to study.

Now that money seems to be either dead or dying, it is time to carry out this dissection. It might be the case that, by violating this taboo, we will find out ways to change things on a larger scale, especially considering the long due line of innovation in the field of accountancy that has still to be applied.

Ultimately, there are proofs of the rupture I'm lightheartedly pointing out here, in the wake of many new currencies born after Bitcoin: with all irony and irreverence intended. The gates were left open by the mystery man: Satoshi the fool, Satoshi the saint, who breached the line in full view of everyone. There is no longer a taboo on money. Bitcoin is not really about the loss of power of a few governments, but about the possibility for many more people to experiment with the building of new constituencies.

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Participatory art – a paradigm shift from objects to subjects

Suzana Milevska

The shift that has been recognised recently in the field of art from establishing relations between objects towards establishing relations between subjects is not the result of an overnight turn, as it may seem at first sight.¹ It has been greatly influenced by philosophical or sociological theories and today is mainly appropriated by post-conceptual, socially and politically engaged art, or by art activism, although some similar art discourses and practices existed before, anticipating contemporary theory and practice. This text is envisaged as a kind of assessment in which I want to focus on the way some theoretical discourses have shaped this recent 'participatory shift' in the arts.

My main aims are to follow the trajectory along which the established theoretical concepts turn into art projects and to locate the gaps between the promise of participation in theory and its shortcomings in concrete art projects in different contexts. In such a limited space, I cannot undertake an in-depth analysis of the prehistory of the participatory turn. It is clear that, besides the theoretical background of this cultural shift, there have been some other overlooked participatory art phenomena, media and artists that long precede those starting in the early 90s, the period to be examined in this text. Let me mention only a few examples: the video art practice of the independent and guerrilla TV stations (e.g. Top Value TV), participatory theatres such as The Living Theatre, or the early happenings by Alan Kaprow and Mike Kelly from the sixties, as well as the 'new genre public art' coined by Suzanne Lacy.

Besides avoiding any in-depth analysis of previous participatory art practices, I will also have to circumvent any analysis of the political circumstances during the late sixties and early seventies. However, it has to be stressed that they

somehow invite a comparison with today's political context, e.g., the great number of armed conflicts in the world involving the USA or the international threat of anarchy and terrorism that incited the newly awakened social and political conservatism.

At this stage, I also find it important to differentiate between participatory art practices and the much broader term 'interaction', wherein the relations established between the members of the audience or between them and the art objects are much more passive and formal (usually directed by certain formal instructions, given by the artists, that are to be followed during the exhibitions). I have to make all these distinctions to narrow the framework of this text because I want to reflect particularly on the most recent shift of the artists' focus: from dealing with objects and installations towards dealing with subjects and enabling their participation in art activities. I am interested in the processes of establishing certain unique relations with these subjects that are initiated by the artists and in examining the effect of these projects as reflected in the real life of the participants (not only within the 'laboratory conditions' of art galleries). Participation is the activation of certain relations that is initiated and directed by the artists and often encouraged by art institutions, and that sometimes becomes the sole goal of certain art projects.

While inviting the audience to actively participate, the artists of the participatory projects create certain interfaces that are well prepared in advance and highly contextualised in a certain social, cultural and political environment. This shift, I will argue, happens both as an inevitable response by the art practice to the philosophical texts dealing with the re-definition of the concept of community and communitarian, and as a kind of reaction to the societal demand to include and make visible the marginalised groups of citizens

¹ This essay was first published in Austrian art magazine *springerin*, 2/2006.

who have been excluded from the social environment or from participation in public cultural life. Nevertheless, it becomes obvious that art stemming from theoretical and societal participatory discourse invites severe criticism and this text will therefore look at the sources of this criticism as well.

Aporias of 'we'

From the many different categorisations of various participatory art practices I present the one suggested by the art market researcher Alan Brown:

- Inventive Arts Participation—engages the audience in an act of artistic creation that is unique and idiosyncratic.
- Interpretive Arts Participation—a creative act of self-expression that brings alive and adds value to pre-existing works of art.
- Curatorial Arts Participation—a creative act of selecting, organising and collecting art according to one's own artistic sensibility.
- Observational Arts Participation—encompasses arts experiences motivated by some expectation of value.
- Ambient Arts Participation—experiencing art, consciously or unconsciously, that is not consciously select.²

In order to be able to locate the reasons for the vehement criticism directed at participatory projects, let me go back to certain theoretical concepts that I find relevant to such projects. Several references can be used as starting points when discussing participatory art. They are interconnected and interwoven, since all of them concentrate on intersubjectivity, communitarianism or Hardt/Negri's 'multitude'.

I will start my account with a discussion of the philosophical concept of 'being singular plural' as formulated by Jean-Luc Nancy, and the 'coming community' by Giorgio Agamben.³ I will then move towards the sociological concepts that emphasise participation as a crucial societal tendency, vitally necessary today to control the all-embracing neo-liberalism driven by the 'consumerisation' of human relations. At the end, I will focus on the discourses that are very closely related to art theory and art practices, such as the concept of 'relational aesthetics' coined by Nicolas Bourriaud.

Nancy's concept of 'being' is always already 'being with'. According to him, 'being' always entails 'with' as an inevitable conjunction that links different singularities.⁴ Nancy is a philosopher of the 'coessentiality of being-with' because he does not believe in any philosophical solipsism or any "philosophy of the subject in the sense of the final (infinite)

closure in itself of a for-itself".⁵ He goes as far as saying that "there is no 'self' except by virtue of a 'with', which, in fact, structures it".⁶ He finds Heidegger's existential analytics incomplete because, according to him, even though 'Mitsein' is coessential with 'Dasein', it still has a subordinate position.⁷

When Nancy claims that the sharing of the world is a co-implication of existence he refers to the problem that at this moment we cannot truly say 'we': that we have forgotten the importance of 'being-together', 'being-in-common' and 'belonging', and that we live 'without relations'. In order to attain this knowledge and the praxis of 'we', according to Nancy, it is important to understand that 'we' is not a subject in terms of self-identification, nor is that 'we' composed of subjects.⁸ Here Nancy reminds us that the aporia of the 'we' is actually the main aporia of intersubjectivity and he points out the impossibility of pinning down a universal 'we' that consists of always the same components.

Whatever participation is to be discussed in the context of art, it always necessarily refers to a certain 'we', to a certain identification with a particular community in which different members of selected communities (members of the audience, professional groups, homeless people, or children) are to become co-existing parts of a certain 'we'. Even when the conditions of participation of the audience or a selected group or community of people are clearly marked, it is always the 'we' that needs to be created in order for a project to start functioning as a participatory one.

The other part of this 'we' is the artist, the curator, the art institution, or even the state (in some public art projects) that supposedly cares for the invisible, marginalised or neglected 'other' as the counter-part of the very same 'we'. The usual problem with this imaginary 'we' is that it mostly exists only for the duration of a particular art event, except for rare examples where the artists create self-sustainable projects that continue even when they leave with the circus.⁹ Interestingly enough, the always newly created 'we' contains different parts and counter-parts each time when necessary, but it what happened to the previous parts/participants is never stated.

Often the lack of a feeling of belonging to a common group, the lack of having a common identity with the artist-initiator prevents a thorough participatory effect. However, a real participatory effect in fact happens exactly when the conditions of participation are not based on strict commonality and predictable decisions for participation, or on a clear identification with the artist or the concept in terms of social, cultural or political commonalities. In addition, the clearly distinct 'inoperative communities' that refuse to be

2 Taylor, A., 'The Five Modes of Arts Participation', *Arts Journal*, Sept 2006
http://www.artsjournal.com/artfulmanager/main/the_five_modes_of_arts_partici.php.

3 Nancy, J., *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne O'Byrne, Stanford University Press, 2000. Agamben, G., *The Coming Community*, Minnesota University Press, 1993.

4 ibid., p. 13.

5 ibid., p. 29.

6 ibid., p. 94.

7 ibid., p. 93.

8 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 75.

9 ibid.

state ‘accomplices’ can always be more easily seduced by art methods and practices, as they are less involved in official political structures.¹⁰ For Nancy, the fear of communitarian work is related to the fear of totalitarianism that has existed ever since Stalin was associated with communist ideas; he therefore suggests that we should re-think the question of community.¹¹

Fragmented community

In this context it is important to look at Nancy’s remark that community cannot arise from the domain of work.¹² He states that community takes place through the withdrawal from work or ‘unworking’ (*désoeuvrement*), to use Blanchot’s term. Interruption, fragmentation, suspension: that is where community happens for Nancy. “Community is made of interruption of singularities...community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works...”¹³ This interpretation of community as being intrinsically inoperative and fragmentary helps in understanding the way in which participatory art projects function or fail to function in practice, especially when they are to be controlled by institutions.

This is linked to Agamben’s warning about the fact that “what the State cannot tolerate in any way, however, is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging (even in the form of a simple presupposition).”¹⁴ Similarly to Nancy, Agamben sees ‘being-in-common’ as distinct from community. In fact, the most frightening community for the State, according to him, is the one that rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, that is based on singularity and that wants, not to belong, but itself to appropriate belonging.¹⁵

Participatory art projects are distinct from the sociologically highly valued communitarian projects and they differ exactly in the possibility they offer for circumventing the conditions of belonging to a certain pre-existing and socially defined community.

The main question for Nicolas Bourriaud in his *Relational Aesthetics* stems from Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, and is related to Debord’s claim that our society is “a society where human relations are no longer ‘directly

¹⁰ Thomas Hirschhorn’s project ‘Bataille’s Monument’ during Documenta 11 is a typical example of a participatory project that provokes many hopes among the targeted local community that later cannot be fulfilled (a criticism addressed to Hirschhorn during a public debate after his lecture at Victoria Miro Gallery in London, organised by the Goldsmiths College Visual Culture Department as a part of the conference ‘Field Work: Reports from the Fields of Visual Culture’, 2003).

¹¹ Nancy, J., *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, Minnesota University Press, 1991, p. 80-81. Nancy writes about the inscription of ‘infinite resistance’.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p. 86.

experienced’”¹⁶. In line with Debord’s critique of representation and its mediation of the world, Bourriaud asks: “Is it still possible to generate relationships with the world, in a practical field of art-history traditionally earmarked for their ‘representation’”?¹⁷ For him, the answer to this question lies precisely in the direct relations that artists can establish through their art activities as ‘social interstices’, which, according to him, is an effect of urbanisation.

Bourriaud contrasts Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ‘natural state’, which was dense and ‘trouble-free’, with the city as a “tangible symbol and historical setting of the state of society”.¹⁸ By referring to Althusser’s notion of a ‘state of encounter imposed on people’, Bourriaud interprets this system of intensive encounters as a direct source of linked artistic practices, as “an art form where the substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and which takes ‘being-together’ as a central theme”.¹⁹ Perhaps Bourriaud’s interpretation of works of art in Marxist terms as social interstices, using the term ‘interstice’ as a space in human relations that suggests alternative “trading possibilities than those in effect within this system”²⁰, best explains the basis for his ‘relational aesthetics’, but it does not explain very well the participation of these relational projects within the overall societal functions.

In one of her texts, Marie Gee cites Arza Churchman’s discussion of various kinds of participation. According to Gee, Churchman defines participation as “decision-making by unelected, non-appointed citizens, or the incorporation of community members in planning and design. Without that decision-making element in participation, or if decisions are made by elected or appointed representatives, she will not even call it ‘participation’ but rather ‘involvement’”.²¹

Two additional contradictions are at work in participatory art practices:

- the limits of participatory and relational theories of art in the light of a postcolonial critique of art and cultural institutions
- the inclusion/exclusion binary and the tension between its social and political definitions in different contexts (e.g. liberal democracy and transitional societies)

One of the main criticisms of the impact of relational theory and the extent to which it is applicable to artists influenced by postcolonial critique is that participatory art projects can easily be captured in a vicious circle of criticism without taking into account positive perspectives and any proposition for ‘real’ participation. These kinds of projects can be

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁷ Bourriaud, N., *Relational Aesthetics*, Paris, 2002, p. 9.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p.9.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p.15.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Gee, M., ‘Yes in My Front Yard: Participation and the Public Art Process’, *High Performance*, No.69/70, Spring/Summer 1995, 31 Jan 2006.

more easily accepted by society as a welcome, mild social critique instead of a more direct political critique.

There is another problem with participatory art in activist circles, when art is understood as a call for revolution and its success or failure is measured according to its revolutionary prerogatives. The interpretation of art as an agency that should circumvent the main societal and ideological obstacles that artists face outside of European democracy is prescriptive and expects too big an impact from art activism projects.

Finally, I would argue that art has yet to find a position that would reconcile the contradictions between these two radical ends: between ‘critique for critique’s sake’ and art that can be turned into a revolutionary instrument.

What's the use? On the value of participatory projects

Susanne Jaschko

In this essay I approach participation and participatory art from a critical standpoint. This I will do in the context of both my faith in participation as a social and artistic method, and of recognising the difficulties and limitations in its application. Participatory art has been criticised on suspicion of making tolerable the side effects of the neo-liberal backlash that has swept through Western society. Does it give the marginalised a voice, a release valve, seemingly empowering them while actually supporting the established order?

This criticism is to be taken all the more seriously now that an increasingly broad field of contemporary art is using participation, and is less and less informed by approaches that are utopian, provocative, vexing or truly radical. It does seem, however, that the criterion for participatory art—having social impact—is from a different time and may no longer be up to date.

Participation: ideal and burden?

According to Gijs van Oenen, an exponent of the theory of Interpassivity, the time of social utopias and radicalism is long gone. He sees evidence of this in the late 1960s, but more so in the seventies and its aftermath in the decades that followed. Communities are no longer defined by identity and controversy as in the ‘interactive era’, they are instead defined by objects. The great social and political debates, those in which a stand could be taken, are over. Although we still want to construct society, we no longer know exactly why or how. There is simply a lack of inspiration.¹

Van Oenen argues that people today experience participation primarily as a burden. The imperative for self-determination with which the modern person is preoccupied, stands in opposition to a genuine alternative: to make no choice, remain passive, and choose the mere presence over action and active participation. Overburdened people refuse to take a stand or make commitments, giving preference to communities that are temporary and largely purposeless, with no social goals.²

If the picture Van Oenen paints of the current state of society is accurate, then does it follow that artists who combine social goals with participatory projects, and people who want to commit to active participation, have misconceptions of today’s society, and hold onto romantic, nostalgic ideals from the past? Is Van Oenen’s theory not supported by the countless participatory art projects that make no claims of social criticism or radical change, but instead rely on short-term participation in gestural, symbolic acts or rites, from which participants are quickly released? Participative art and ‘socially engaged art’ can no longer be used as synonyms. Neither producing nor participating in participatory art today necessarily requires any kind of political activism. Given the different applications and goals of participation in contemporary art, it seems indeed problematic to talk about participatory art in general and thus lend support to the notion that it exists as a homogeneous genre.

1 Van Oenen, Gijs, ‘Gemeenschapsdragers’, Sonsbeek Lezing, Sept 19, 2008.
<http://www.sonsbeek2008.nl/read/nl/home/reflectie/12>.

2 ibid.

Connotations of community and Gemeinschaft

The participants, or rather, the potential participants of participatory art projects require a similarly critical and accurate consideration as the artistic practice using participation as a method; more particularly because ‘community’ is often referred to in this context, and this term has both an unclear definition and has historically had different connotations. In sociology, an explicit distinction between society and community emerged at the end of the 19th century. German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies described the feeling of belonging as the engine of community action, in contrast to the individual purpose and rational evaluation that characterises social action. Tönnies saw community as a lost principle from the past that is once again desirable.³ This and related ideals of community were prominent in sociology until the middle of last century. Reflected in this prominence and positive valuation of community within scientific discourse, was a fundamental scepticism of successful self-regulation of liberal societies. Karl Marx also described the ideal of a classless society, in which personal freedom is a possibility for all, with the term ‘community’.⁴

It is a short leap from these historical concepts to how community is viewed in the present. Community has not lost its appeal; the historical connotations still resonate today where an alternative to society is sought in community. But there are also negative criticisms of community, particularly the tendencies towards isolation and ideological domination. Seen from this perspective, community represents the antithesis of open society and is suspected of acting to destroy it.

The pluralisation of lifestyles, the growth of geographical, political and social mobility, the greater independence of biographical determinants, in other words a pluralisation of identity in late-capitalist society, is without doubt changing community into more fluid and temporary forms than previously. In this abundance of multiple affiliations, more-or-less communities and collectives, digital communities are, because of their artefacts—the traces left in the Internet—much easier to study than any other form of community. The focus of the research is mainly the organisational principles, productivity and creativity; they cannot be adequately explained with conventional theories. The long-term

commitment required for the formation and functioning of open-source communities seems to directly contradict the thesis of Van Oenen. The not-for-profit collaboration of programmers is motivated by values other than commercial gain: a common ethos, a belief in the common cause and a feeling of belonging. In these communities social capital is built on respect, favours, confidence, influence, and sovereignty accrued by individuals through their activity and sustained participation, and it is on this social economy that the community is based.⁵

Today the German word *Gemeinschaft* cannot be used the same way as the English word ‘community’, partly due to the Nazi’s invocation of the term as a keyword in political propaganda and as a principle topic of sociological research.⁶ Subsequently, *Gemeinschaft* was long inseparable from its historical connotations for German speakers and is consequently less present than ‘community’ in both the vocabulary of politics and that of art discourse. As a result, there are no meaningful translations in German of ‘community-based art’, a term that is omnipresent in the context of public art and culture politics in anglophone countries. Community-based art is a term that has emerged to describe a practice supported by the notion that participation in art has a positive effect on the individual development of the participant, as well as on the development of the ‘community’ as a whole. But here too the term ‘community’ remains out of focus: it often refers to a group of people sharing a space, interests, identity or goals, but in most cases a simple geographic link is enough to warrant consideration as ‘community’.

Utilitarism vs. transversality

A François Materasso study from 1997 that emphasised the stark social effect of participation in art had a significant influence on the flourishing of participatory projects in the UK.⁷ In the wake of the study, Great Britain in particular underwent a realignment of cultural policy, which is now more focussed on the social and supports culture and artistic production for its utilitarian aspects. The study described the positive effects of participative projects on those taking part: improvements in health, social contact, self-esteem, happiness, and a feeling of cohesion and identification with a location. Materasso proposed participative art projects as an ‘effective’ and ‘cost-efficient’ means to achieve social goals. Such projects represent a financial risk that is insignificant in proportion to their social and economic impact.⁸ The

3 Tönnies, Ferdinand, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie*, Darmstadt 1991, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, reprint of the 8th edition, 1935.

4 “Erst in der Gemeinschaft erhält das Individuum die Mittel, seine Anlagen nach allen Seiten hin auszubilden; erst in der Gemeinschaft wird also die persönliche Freiheit möglich.” Marx, Karl, ‘Die deutsche Ideologie’, 1945/46, via *Die Frühschriften*, published by Siegfried Landshut, Stuttgart 1971, Kröner.

“Only in community [with others has each] individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible.” Marx, Karl, ‘The German Ideology’, Part I: Feuerbach. Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook, D. Proletarians and Communism, Individuals, Class, and Community

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/germanideology/ch01d.htm>.

5 See Bacon, Jono, *The Art of Community. Building the New Age of Participation*, O'Reilly Media, 2009, p. 2-6.

6 See Breuer, Stefan, „Gemeinschaft“ in der „deutschen Soziologie“ (1933-1945), *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, v. 31, issue 5, Oct 2002, p. 354-372.

7 Matarasso, François, *Use or Ornament, The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, Comedia 1997.

8 “For now we can say only that participatory arts projects are different, effective and cost very little in the context of spending on social goals. They represent an insignificant financial risk to public services, but can produce impacts (social and economic) out of proportion to their cost.”, ibid, p. 76.

author further noted that while most projects had a clear aim, few were underpinned by social goals, which increased the difficulty of evaluating the projects. In order to better determine the success of participatory projects, such social goals ought to be clearly formulated.⁹

Matarasso calls for a fundamentally different art practice than that which was extant. He promotes participative practice that has clearly formulated social goals and aims. Matarasso's expectation of art is in direct contrast to transversal art practice, which is characterised specifically by ambiguity or 'not-belonging' to a particular discipline, institution or system of valorisation. The majority of participative projects precisely demarcate this transversality: they resist categorisation as art, political action or anything else by defying the logic, hierarchies and functioning methods of each respective system. The impact of such projects is just as varied and evades an evaluation built on the conventional logic of the system. In her essay "The Transversal and the Invisible: How do you really make a work of art that is not a work of art?" Susan Kelly argues for transversal practices that do not assume (re)recognisable forms, but instead develop a 'particular consistency' even while running the risks of marginalisation, invisibility, or inoperability.¹⁰

Kelly and Matarasso's controversial perspectives crystallise the (almost classical) basic conflict of participatory projects: How can something that seeks to escape conventional valorisation be evaluated? How can a participative practice that must be specific and comprehensible in its implementation preserve a certain degree of openness and indeterminacy?

Conclusion

Contemporary art is a catchment for experimental, transversal, participative and collaborative projects. In addition to classically realised art-as-marketable-object, a wide field of artistic practice has been established with the most differentiated applications and realisations ever seen and this spectrum is funded accordingly by a variety of institutions such as museums, art centres, universities, and communities. Here artists find their niches and resources that allow them to work beyond traditional categories and pursue artistic innovation—despite Matarasso, and without being exposed to any great valorisation pressure. This freedom may be due to the concept of artistic experimentation representing value in itself. It could be argued, however, that projects based on social participation must offer more value to each participant, and not just as a means of encouraging participation, but based on the fundamental idea that artists look beyond their own interests and see participants as emancipated and equal individuals.

But it would be wrong to require participatory projects to always add value to the community or society. Participatory processes, at least those that go beyond short-term, symbolic or gestural actions, have an impact principally on the social fabric connecting the participants, but they are difficult to control so their effects are almost unplannable and only detectable to a limited extent.

Participation requires the individual positioning and action of individuals within existing structures and systems, which do not exist independently of people, but are determined by them. Participatory projects offer a new space for action, a parallel or alternative system for customisation and use. It is the difference between these new, alternative systems—commonly created and utilised action spaces—and the conventional ones, which reveals otherwise invisible or hardly perceptible dynamics, structures, and human relationships to each other, to objects, and to space. Although participatory projects do not necessarily lead to massive change, it is the increased visibility of these social dynamics and structures that, in times of fluid and temporary affiliations, makes participation as a social and artistic method valuable.

9 "Most participatory arts projects have clear management objectives (they state what they intend to do), but relatively few have precise social goals: what they intend should happen as a result of what they have done. It therefore is much harder to evaluate the work, since no measurable goal is identified and no benchmarks for success established. Ideally, projects with social aspirations should address specific needs identified in partnership with those who are intended to benefit.", ibid, p. 81.

10 "Put another way, and to refer back to Badiou, when such activities are made visible as art, as the conjunction 'as' suggests, we put them , in the form of' what we already know and can account for. I would argue that for practices operating transversally, it is important not to solidify in such recognisable forms, but to attempt instead to render themselves in a particular consistency." Kelly, Susan, 'The Transversal and the Invisible: How do you really make a work of art that is not a work of art?', p. 4 f.

http://www.republicart.net/disc/mundial/kelly01_en.htm.

Credits

Written by **Christian Nold, Nathalie Aubret & Susanne Jaschko**

with essays by **Antti Jauhainen, Chris Lee, Dennis Roio aka Jaromil, Pekko Koskinen, Susanne Jaschko, Suzana Milevska**

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Authors

Christian Nold

is an artist and academic researcher from London. He invents participatory technologies for local areas and grassroots groups which respond to socio-technical issues. In the last decade he has set up 'hacktivist' projects across the world and is now a PhD candidate in the Extreme Citizen Science Group at UCL.

softhook.com

Nathalie Aubret

is a French cultural producer based in Helsinki (Finland). During 2003–2005, she worked as a project coordinator at the Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art in Suomenlinna. Since 2006, she develops, coordinates, and accompanies various projects, processes and collaborations as the coordinator of the cultural association Pixelache.

pixelache.ac

Susanne Jaschko

is a German curator and author based in Berlin. After having worked mainly in the field of new media art and art in public space, she has created prozessagenten, a platform for participatory art and design processes. She holds a PHD in art history from RWTH Aachen.

sujaschko.de/en | prozessagenten.org

Antti Jauhainen

is an elementary school teacher, writer, activist and founding member of Parecon Finland, an organisation focused on ideas of participatory, self-managed and ecological economy.

osallisuustalous.fi

Chris Lee

is a graphic designer based in Toronto. He designs and co-edits the journal Scapegoat, and teaches at OCADU. His work regards graphic design through the lens of currency.

scapegoatjournal.org | unitedunderwear.com

Denis Roio (aka Jaromil)

is an Italian artist, theorist and programmer based in Amsterdam, founder of Dyne.org. Inspired by the 'libre software' empowering ethics he is engaged in building networks as a means of sharing tools, choosing to view knowledge as a dialogical and non-hierarchical process. He is a PhD candidate in the Planetary Collegium M-Node.

dyne.org

Pekko Koskinen

is a Finnish reality game designer who conceives new forms of everyday reality. He also plays around with various accepted forms of art. He is a research administrator in Reality Research Center, and a member of YKON, an advocacy group for utopian thought.

todellisuus.fi/en

Suzana Milevska

is a theorist and curator of visual art and culture based in Skopje, Macedonia and in Vienna, Austria, where she was appointed as the first Endowed Professor for Central and South Eastern European Art Histories at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna in 2013. Her theoretical and curatorial interests include postcolonial critique of hegemonic power regimes of representation, gender theory, feminist art, participatory and collaborative art practices. She holds a PhD in visual culture from Goldsmiths College, London.

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